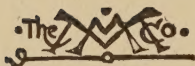


EIGHT WAYS OF LOOKING
AT CHRISTIANITY



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EIGHT WAYS OF LOOKING AT CHRISTIANITY

BY
GRANVILLE HICKS

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To
DOROTHY

FOREWORD

Though in part this book has grown out of my own need for surveying the field of religion as widely and as carefully as possible, it is in large measure the result of two years of book reviewing. As literary editor of the *Christian Leader* I have read, so far as one person could, all the books dealing with religion which have appeared in the past twenty-four months. Out of that reading this book has come, offering little that is new but summarizing the points of view of a variety of thinkers.

It would be impossible to list the names of all the men who have helped me, either through their books or by the spoken word, but there are two men in particular whose aid and encouragement I wish to acknowledge. Dr. John van Schaik, editor of the *Christian Leader*, and Professor Henry J. Cadbury, formerly of Harvard Theological School and now of Bryn Mawr College, were kind enough to read the manuscript in part, but my obligation to them goes far beyond this service. Dr. van Schaik, who, indeed, made the book possible by appointing me to the literary editorship of his journal, has encouraged me from the first and has

repeatedly given me assistance. Professor Cadbury, during the two years which I spent in his classes, placed me under an obligation not only with reference to this book but also with regard to my teaching and to my outlook on life. To both these men I would express my gratitude and appreciation.

GRANVILLE HICKS.

Northampton, Mass.

August, 1926.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. PERSONAE DRAMATIS	13
II. A WAY OF LIFE	22
III. A WAY OF SUPERSTITION	35
IV. THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE	45
V. INTERLUDE	51
VI. THE FUNDAMENTALS AND THE BIBLE	55
VII. THE FUNDAMENTALS AND CHRIST . .	70
VIII. THE KINGDOM OF GOD	83
IX. JESUS AND THE LIFE OF TO-DAY . .	99
X. THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL	105
XI. SCIENCE AND RELIGION	113
XII. THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH . . .	124
XIII. AND IN CONCLUSION	138

EIGHT WAYS OF LOOKING
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CHAPTER ONE

PERSONAE DRAMATIS

In three months of teaching at Caldgate I had made few friends, and the Christmas recess was proving a cheerless affair. Two dark rooms, which obstinately resisted all effort at decoration, filled me with depression, an emotion aggravated by the sight of a snow-covered campus left undefiled in the absence of the student body. I wanted to get out of doors, but I was not in the mood for walking alone. Refusing even to glance out the window, I sulkily devoted myself to my books. Downstairs the telephone bell rang repeatedly while I pretended not to hear it. At last my landlady, in her laboriously conscientious way, answered. I heard her climb the stairs as far as the landing, whence she called, "Mr. Cleaves." Without hoping for too much, I threw my book on the couch and hurried to the telephone.

It was Dr. Beardsley calling. Beardsley was one of the half-dozen acquaintances I had made since coming to Caldgate. A friend had written him about me, and he had promptly made a visit. I liked his sincerity and good humor, but I had only once attended the First Unitarian Church, of which

he was pastor, and I did not expect to become a regular attendant. "Cleaves," he said, "a few friends of mine, including two of your colleagues, are going out in the country to a house I have borrowed. We want to have a good long talk and a chance to get into the woods. I'd like to have you come along."

Of course I accepted. I would have accepted any invitation that tempted me away from my books and into the country. I took the stairs in half a dozen bounds, and my clothes were packed twenty minutes before the automobile horn sounded outside. The drive occupied about an hour, most of which we spent discussing education. Leaving the main highway, we followed a rutty drive until we stopped before a pine-sheltered bungalow. "Belongs to a parishioner of mine," Beardsley explained, as we threw down our luggage outside the door. Excusing himself, he slipped into the next room, while I went out to cover the radiator of the car. The house was so near the consummation of my desires that I was beset with doubts. Who were the men who were coming and of whom Beardsley had as yet said nothing? What would we discuss? Had I, after all, escaped the depression of my rooms only to expose myself to two days of boredom?

Beardsley returned and led me into a room where comfortable chairs spread in a semi-circle around an open fire. The cheeriness of the place made a start at dispelling my doubt. Instinctively I went

to warm my hands. Beardsley's thin and wrinkled face reflected the fire's glow. It was tanned like old leather, an ascetic face, I thought, though relieved by an optimistic mouth and encouraging eyes. About fifty, I should imagine, Beardsley was a man of contrasts. Even as his agreeably humorous eyes belied the ascetic twist to his face, so an impression of limitless durability challenged the evidences of ill health in his thin frame, his stooped shoulders, and his alarming cough. He was not a well man, anyone would say, but I knew enough of his war record in the Red Cross to confirm that impression of reserve strength. Moreover, since the war he had borne the cares of a large parish, which he had saved from slow decline and made a power in the college community.

"Sit down here where you can get the warmth," he bade me. "Do you smoke? Well, I prefer a pipe too, but here are cigarettes and cigars if you want them. I'm glad we arrived first, but I hope the others will be here soon."

We lit our pipes, and once mine was burning properly I asked him, "Are you in the habit of doing things like this?"

He chuckled. "Well, rather. I like to talk, and I've managed to find some other people who have the same weakness. Two or three of us meet regularly, but this is something special. After all, there's nothing like the exchange of ideas."

He was beginning to philosophize on the value

of discussion and the place of the Socratic method, when we heard a car bumping its way over the ruts. He ran to the door, returning in a few minutes with a much younger man, thirty-five or less I estimated, whom he introduced as Mr. Priest. Priest bowed to me cordially but with reserve. Above his fine, thin-lipped mouth a black moustache traced its closely clipped outline. He wore the neatest of gray knickerbockers, and as he lit a short, straight-stemmed pipe suggested the perfect man of the world.

Beardsley continued, "I was just telling Cleaves that I've had a hankering for a rousing discussion. I've been alternating lately between periods of intellectual staleness and periods of effervescence. I need stimulus, and I want a chance to get some things off my chest. I thought we'd renew our college days. Scott Fitzgerald or Percy Marks or somebody quite truthfully says that in college one always discusses just two subjects, religion and sex. We've discussed many things, Priest, sex included, but usually we've avoided the fundamentals of religion. This time I want to grasp the bull by the horns."

Again the sound of a car, and Beardsley rushed out. I spoke a few casual words to Priest, wanting to ask him just what I'd been let in for, but he seemed rather cold and a little formidable. He spoke at random, but with bearing on my thoughts. "Beardsley is a great man for discussion. At home

he has scientists, politicians, I don't know who. They like to come. He always seems to pick his company helter-skelter, but there is usually a good reason why each is present." He looked at me as if he were wondering why I had been invited. I wondered too, but in a way his words had been reassuring.

When Beardsley returned, he had four men with him. After formal introductions he settled us all in comfortable chairs, and then resumed his conversation. "Yes, I wanted to grasp the bull by the horns. I've brought you here to discuss religion, without definition, and without preliminary. But first I think you ought to know each other better. Let me go round the room. Dr. Pratt is the pastor of the Elm Street Baptist Church, not a large church as churches in Caldgate go, but an important one. It reaches more of the common people in the city than any other except the Catholic church. Mr. Pratt has as much influence in the community as any man here. No wonder he's sitting next to Kilpatrick and hobnobbing with him. They served on the city council together for ten years. They stood side by side and fought the liquor traffic, cleaned out the red light district, built a respectable jail, and won the everlasting curses of the mayor and his gang."

Beardsley began to relate an anecdote of the city council, and I took the opportunity to examine the two men of whom he was speaking. Pratt, from

whose red, smooth-shaven face cheerful intensity shone forth, appeared to be Beardsley's own age. I observed that his brown business suit was in not the best condition, the cuffs of the trousers a little frayed, one button of the vest unloosed as if it had been bought when he was three or four years younger and ten or fifteen pounds lighter. Kilpatrick was also a large man, but tall and rather imposing, about sixty I judged. A long gray moustache, the keenest of blue eyes, and gray, thick hair contributed to the distinction of a face that was unmistakably Irish. Beardsley began to describe him, speaking of him as a distinguished lawyer and a politician with a difference, "a man who has more than once honored me by accepting my hospitality."

I could see that Beardsley was enjoying himself. "A born toastmaster," I thought with a touch of malice. He finished with Kilpatrick, and began with the man on my right, Graff, a member of the astronomy department, a very young but very brilliant professor, whom I casually knew. Graff, I decided, was as unfamiliar with the other members of the group as I. Beardsley discussed Graff's work with easy familiarity, clearly amazing Graff by mentioning a contribution to a technical journal on the size of the universe. He wriggled uneasily as Beardsley heaped praise upon his achievements. I determined that I should know him better before the year was over.

Before I knew it, Beardsley was talking about me. "Cleaves," he said, "was brought here under false pretenses. He is an English instructor in the college. He inhabits a couple of depressing rooms in a damp and unlovely house. I knew he would be unhappy at home, and I counted on that to win an acceptance for my invitation. It did, and here he is, wondering why I ever invited him to participate in a discussion of religion. Simply, Cleaves, because you have a critical mind. I have read your reviews and sketches, and I know the quality and character of your intellect. We are to discuss religion, and most of us will indulge in flights of fancy and riots of rhetoric. I depend on you to prick our pretty bubbles. I beseech you to be merciless."

His good-natured raillery touched my vanity, though I knew I was foolish to take offense at it. Beardsley was going on, poking fun now at Richard Loring, perhaps the best-known member of the college faculty, a biologist of repute, a much sought after lecturer, and the author of a number of popular books on science. Loring, though only forty, affected a Van Dyke beard, and wore eye-glasses attached to a cord. He never spoke without giving the appearance of delivering the ultimate word on the subject at hand. I knew that in certain fields of biology he had done experimental work of great value, but as a man he had seemed to me in-

sufferable, and for his popular works, which I had never read, I had conceived a vast contempt. I was amused at the deft satirical touches with which Beardsley embellished his flattering account, and I was surprised at the note of affection in his voice.

"Finally," continued Beardsley, "we have our friend, Roderick Priest, who from the pulpit, in the press, and on the lecture platform, has made a name for himself. In theology he is among the leaders of the modernists. An unqualified pacifist, something of a socialist, defender of human rights and upholder of racial equality, he is a rebel, an idealist, and a better golfer than anybody in this room." I looked on Priest's cold sleekness with surprise, incredulous of all but the golfer. He returned my look calmly, without warmth but without hostility.

"And that concludes the roster," said Beardsley. "With the exception of Graff and Cleaves you are all familiar with my ways as host. As I have said, I feel in the mood for a discussion of religion. I have no theories as to how we should approach the subject, no hope of arriving at any definite result. All I hope is that we can exchange our views candidly and, I may add, clearly. I have so far been very loquacious, for which I beg your forgiveness. I shall try—without much hope of success—to be less so, but I trust that you will talk all you please. There is tobacco here in three

forms, if that is any aid to you. The library here is at our disposal. Whoever cares to is perfectly at liberty to go out and stroll through the woods whenever he wants to. Gentlemen—" He relit his pipe, and silence fell upon us.

CHAPTER TWO

A WAY OF LIFE

A little staggered, I awaited the beginning of conversation. It seemed to me incredible that Beardsley could expect this motley group really to discuss so difficult a subject as religion. While most of them had had more warning than I, they all seemed to have come at short notice. That they had come was the surprising and the encouraging thing. I looked at Graff, and he stared back at me, clearly as much at sea as I. He was a complacent young fellow though, and undoubtedly his sense of achievement in his own field made him feel at ease in any company. Voicing my question as well as his own, he asked "Do you really believe, Dr. Beardsley, that we are about to engage in a discussion of religion? We scarcely know each other, and yet you propose that we lay bare our hearts and minds."

Beardsley smiled easily. Pratt and Kilpatrick both stiffened, but the latter spoke first, a note of courteous rebuke in a voice which a suggestion of brogue enriched. "We who know our host well, Mr. Graff, are pleased and proud to be asked to

come this morning. Never have we been disappointed in these informal gatherings of our friend's. I had planned for a busy two days, but I gladly gave up my plans in order to join you gentlemen. In this room and in this atmosphere I feel no hesitation in baring heart and mind, as you put it, and I will confess to you, Professor Graff, that in my profession it is not often that I have the inclination to do so and less often that I humor such an inclination. It is true that Dr. Beardsley has suggested a very delicate subject and if anyone were to feel its delicacy more than the others, surely it would be I, a lone Catholic. I do feel its delicacy very acutely, but I am all the more willing to discuss the subject with you gentlemen here, because I could not discuss it elsewhere or in another company." He restored to his mouth the cigar with which he had been gently gesturing, and soon smoke almost obscured the rugged old face.

Pratt still wanted to speak, but again he was forestalled, this time by Priest, who in his thin-lipped way said, "Tolerance, my dear Graff, is a principle with which you are not unfamiliar?"

I looked to see how Graff was responding to this perfectly polite but distinctly hammer-and-tongs treatment. He was beaming, his youthful face reflecting both satisfaction and anticipation. "If this is a fair sample," he said, "you mean tolerance and not a decorous ignoring of really vital subjects. If so, I'm with you."

“Good,” cried Beardsley, “you belong with us.” He looked at me as if wondering if I also belonged there, and, a little piqued by that look, I hastened to express a thought that had been running through my mind. “Tolerance,” I said, “what is it, and why should one be proud of it? If you really believe you’re right, then the other man’s wrong. Of course if you’re uncertain, if the matter is one that cannot be settled, then it’s only common sense to be tolerant of the other fellow’s guesses. In religion, however, most people are unwilling to admit that they’re only guessing. They think they know. Take a concrete example. Mr. Pratt is a Baptist, believing certain things which Dr. Beardsley as a Unitarian denies. In what sense can Mr. Pratt tolerate Dr. Beardsley?”

Pratt spoke now, the words leaping out in a torrent. “A point well taken, Mr. Cleaves, a point well taken. Tolerance is either the product of honestly admitted doubt or of indifference. Let me take a concrete instance. Dr. Graves, the Episcopal rector, doesn’t believe in prohibition, not because he’s a drinking man, but because he thinks it won’t work. Now I have great faith in the efficacy of prohibition. But we can be tolerant of each other’s opinions, I admitting that perhaps prohibition won’t work, he admitting that perhaps it will. Each acts on the assumption that he is right, but either accepts the possibility that he may be wrong. Or there is the matter of some new appointment at

the college. Mr. Cleaves and I might have opposite opinions, but we should admit that it really mattered very little one way or the other, and we should therefore be tolerant. Religion, on the other hand, is not like these matters. I am not indifferent to religion, and I certainly will not admit that my religious views are no better than guesses. I believe that I am right and that Beardsley is wrong, and if I could save Beardsley or one of his parish I would certainly do so and feel that I had done no less than my clear duty."

"And yet," said Beardsley, "you manage to talk with me."

"Yes," Pratt answered. "Logically I suppose it could be said that I ought not to do so, except in the hope of converting you." His perplexed expression changed to one of affection as he added, "And my hope of that is very slight."

"Fortunately we are not logical," commented Priest.

"It is sure that we are not," agreed Pratt, "fortunately or unfortunately. I find myself associating with men whose religious views differ from mine and whom I believe to be damned unless they can be brought to see the light. I cannot convert them, and they cannot convert me. It does no harm, then, even if it does no good, for us to exchange views. I love these men, as I believe my Master would have me love them. I labor for the salvation of their souls. But I cannot be always

trying to convert them. I do what I can, and then I reconcile myself. I find that here on earth these men serve many of the ends that I seek to serve, and I gladly associate myself with them. If they want to know what I believe, I tell them, and if they want to tell me what they believe, I listen. We remain friends, and I have come to value friendship very highly."

"Friendship is a better word than tolerance," Beardsley said. "We are all of us here in much the spirit that Pratt has described, each convinced that he is right but each willing to respect the other for all his wrongness. But tell me, Pratt, would you stop me from preaching my heresy if you had the power?"

"No."

"I think we must all," suggested Kilpatrick dryly, "admit the God-given right of a man to be wrong, always supported by John Milton's saying that 'Truth is strong, next to the Almighty.'"

"We are agreed," pronounced Loring. He looked about him to see if any questioned his dictum. "Let us, then, proceed."

"All right," said Priest blandly, with an amused smile at Loring's pontifical air. "I throw out, not a definition of religion but a partial description, a fundamental fact about religion: religion is a way of life."

"Whatever that means," said Graff.

"It means primarily that religion is concerned not

with what you believe but with how you live. Religion is bound up with conduct. It is the most inclusive thing in life, touching all personal and social relationships."

"Then," I inquired, "you leave out belief altogether? You would say quite flatly that morality and religion are the same thing. Your criterion of religion is what a man does."

"On the contrary," Priest returned with a suave smile, "I don't leave out belief altogether, I don't say that religion and morality are the same thing, and I don't make my criterion of religion what a man does."

"Very good," said Beardsley. "Of course, Cleaves, we who hold that religion is a way of life don't leave out belief. Conduct is based on belief."

"I deny that," said Graff. "And I am not talking behaviorism or any other school of psychology. I appeal quite flatly to common sense. How far does belief influence conduct. Compare any two groups, Christians and atheists for example, and I wager that you will find substantially the same types of conduct in both groups."

"On the surface that appears to be true," Beardsley rejoined, "but in a more subtle sense conduct is certainly based on belief. The primary thing is whether we believe the universe is friendly to our highest ideals or not. Habit is so strong in a man that he may go on doing the same things if he suddenly comes to the conclusion that the universe is

neutral. I know perfectly well that he is not going to go out and murder his employer, embezzle his funds, and run away with his wife. But in subtler, though equally important ways, his conduct will be changed. Then of course there is belief in immortality, the possibility of future punishment, and so forth. Such belief probably has less influence on conduct than we like to think, but it nevertheless has a great effect."

"That expresses the argument in part," Priest acknowledged, "but I should like to drive home the answer to Mr. Cleaves. Belief is important, is fundamental, but only because it is reflected in conduct. In one sense at least it is secondary, not primary. Now as to the other two charges, I think I can take them up together. My criterion of religion is not what a man does but what he is. The distinction, which is not always easy to make, is of the highest importance. Jesus always emphasized a central righteousness of character, as had most of the prophets before him. He was not interested in the jots and tittles, in the tithing of *anise* and *cumin*. He broke with the Scribes and Pharisees, who were concerned to do just so. He taught his disciples that they should be rather than do. 'Love,' very boldly says Saint Augustine, 'and do as you like.' That is enough to explain what I mean when I say that my criterion of religion is not what a man does but what he is.

"As for religion and morality, perhaps Mr.

Cleaves was justified in assuming that I believe them to be the same, but you will remember that I said that in calling religion a way of life I was giving only a partial description. Just a minute." He rose hastily, strode to one of the bookcases that filled every available foot of wall-space, and, sitting on the window-seat, where the light was better, began to read from the book he had taken. "It's James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Here! 'In broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that religious life consists in the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme happiness lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto.' There, you see, are both belief and conduct. We believe in an unseen order, and we act on that basis."

Beardsley was now at the shelves. Drawing out a little book, he said, "Leuba puts it this way: 'We would therefore throw out of our definition anything which did not include—(1) A belief in a great and superior psychic power—whether personal or not. (2) A dynamic relation—formal and organized or otherwise—between man and that Higher Power tending to the preservation, the increase, and the ennobling of life.' "

"We were going to avoid definitions," resumed Priest, after thanking Beardsley, "but I think James and Leuba give us something to work on, although they clearly define religion at a minimum. All I tried to do was to suggest further that religion was

a way of life. If that were all, then there would be no distinction between religion and morality, for an ethical code is also a way of life. I might try again and say that religion is a way of life involving adjustment to an unseen order. Perhaps that makes it clearer?"

I nodded, but Beardsley added, "It is precisely the people who regard religion as a way of life that Dr. Peabody would include in the church of the spirit that he discusses in the book of that name. It is because religion from that point of view is a matter of spirit that it is so hard to define."

He paused. Priest nodded. Loring nodded. These three were evidently in agreement. Beardsley threw a log on the fire, which he prodded vigorously. A pine branch mildly tapped against the window. The three who were in agreement waited for a reply. Graff, occupied with his own thoughts, seemed unwilling to press his views. Recalling that neither Pratt nor Kilpatrick had spoken for the past half-hour, I looked at them and became aware that Pratt wanted to speak but was deferring to Kilpatrick.

Pratt it was, however, who picked up the cudgels of war. "I suppose," he began, "that you are expecting Kilpatrick or me to disagree with you. I can't speak for Kilpatrick, of course, though I imagine that in this matter we are in essential agreement. I agree that religion is a way of life." He protruded his red face to see if we showed surprise,

as I for one unmistakably did. "Yes, religion is a way of life. All I would add to what has already been said is that I believe religion gives us more guidance in life than you are willing to admit." Again he paused to stare about him, seriousness in every line of his face. "We have the Bible, and the Bible contains very definite instructions about life. It tells that there is a Kingdom of God, and that it is of first importance to us all. It tells us that there is a way in which we can win that Kingdom. God himself took on human form, lived among men, and died for our sins that we might have eternal life. Christ was a ransom for our shortcomings, and without him we could never attain the blessedness we all covet. Moreover, we have in the Bible definite rules for conduct. I agree with Priest that central righteousness of character is more important than individual laws or particular acts. But it is my conviction that there can be no satisfactory adjustment to the reality of the universe without recognition of God's revelation and his plan of salvation. I think you will see that I am to a great degree in harmony with the rest of you."

"Except," said Beardsley, "that you insist there is only one way of life, and that is yours."

Pratt replied simply, "How could I do otherwise, for I have God's words before me? I have no need to consult James and Leuba and the others; the Bible is authority enough for me. It is plain enough for all to read, and the simplest folk know

its meaning as well as, frequently better than, the most educated."

Loring cleared his throat, and tapping his eyeglasses he spoke, "I am greatly interested in what you say about religion as a way of life, Pratt. I should have thought that you fundamentalists would rather have defined it as a way of belief."

"A common misapprehension," said Pratt, ignoring the supercilious tone, "but a natural one. I regret to say that a good many of my friends over-emphasize the importance of belief. In one sense they are right; its importance cannot be over-emphasized. But they give the impression that belief is all there is. I should say without hesitation that acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Lord is essential not only for salvation but also for a truly good life. I should say that no man can truly follow Jesus unless he confesses him as Lord and Master, and I should say conversely that any true follower of Christ would gladly confess his sonship. I should say further that, compared to the recognition of the divine plan of salvation, conduct itself is relatively unimportant. And having said all that I should still say that conduct itself is of tremendous importance, that our interest in the life eternal must not blot out our interest in the life that is here, and that religion is truly a way of life as well as a way of belief and a way of salvation."

So intense had Pratt been that, as he finished and settled back into his chair, all of us found our-

selves settling back into our chairs. Loring tapped and lit a cigarette with a nervous gesture, and Priest sucked an empty pipe. On Kilpatrick's strong old face lines of meditation furrowed their way. Beardsley nodded his admiration. Only Graff seemed unmoved.

Hesitantly I broke the silence. "Do you know," I said, "if I believed, as you do, that all who didn't accept Christ were irrevocably damned, I couldn't sleep easy nights?"

"I don't," said Pratt, and I knew that he meant it.

"I should stand on the street corners and tell people that they must come to Jesus."

"I do," he answered, "and sorry business it is. They don't listen. Sometimes they scoff. I can't make them listen. I can't revile them. I can only tell them the good news that is in Christ Jesus. If they don't accept—" He sighed. Then suddenly, in amazement, he flashed at me, "You didn't think that I sat in smug satisfaction gloating over my own salvation and the damnation of the countless millions, did you?" It was neither a challenge nor a protest but a simple question. I shook my head.

"But look here," exclaimed Loring, "you know that there are rascals who accept Jesus. Are they saved?"

"I don't know. Most of my brother ministers would say yes. But to me saying that the repetition of a few phrases brings salvation is like—well,

magic. I think that a man has to accept Jesus with his whole heart, and no man could do that and remain a rascal. But where draw the line? We are all sinners. We who believe are strengthened by God's grace, but we are still sinners, such sinners that we could never be saved if God through his love had not sent his Son to die for us. I believe that any sinner can be saved by truly believing on the Lord. Beyond that I can't say."

"Most fundamentalists would say, however," persisted Loring, "that anyone who accepted Christ would be saved." Pratt nodded. "And they would say that anyone who didn't would be damned?" Again Pratt nodded. "Well, how do you feel about that?"

"In God's providence he may save those who refuse his plan of salvation, but he does not say so, and I know of no path but that which he has revealed to us—" But he was silent, and so were we all.

CHAPTER THREE

A WAY OF SUPERSTITION

To my surprise Graff, who had hitherto seemed exceedingly bored, now preëmpted the central position. Rising from his chair near the wall he stood by the fire, his left arm thrown over the mantel. With his disarming youthfulness of countenance he seemed to be deprecating any thought that he was trying to be either dogmatic or smart. His words came with amazing fluency, and despite his youth he rather created the impression that he was lecturing a group of freshmen.

"If you have finished discussing whether religion is a way of life or a way of belief, I should like to propose the thesis that it is a way of superstition. I am an astronomer, and for me to venture to speak among professional students of religion may seem presumptuous. Yet I have been something of a student of religion myself, and I think it only fair that my point of view should be expressed. I shall begin by saying a word or two about the origin of religion, though what I say will be familiar to those of you who have read the works of Tylor,

Frazer, and Leuba." He cleared his throat and with a gesture plunged into his subject.

"The primary root of religion is the instinct of self-preservation. This is inextricably associated with a desire for the preservation of the group, for man does not and cannot live for himself alone. The other side of the shield is self-realization, another aspect of self-preservation. Now the bare impulse of self-preservation has nothing religious about it, but by experience man learns his insufficiency. Things happen to the primitive man, and he naturally believes that somebody made them happen. He comes to believe that there are powers that can influence his well-being, that these powers are actuated by motives like his own, and that they may be worked upon so as to avoid harm or to bring good. What a man wants from his gods, then, will largely determine the manner in which he conceives them. If he wants plenty of food, he will think of them in one way; if he is interested in higher values, he will think of them in another way.

"Now man gets his ideas of spirits largely from his own experience. Primitive man believes in ghosts. Why shouldn't he? He is familiar with death, and he sees very clearly that something goes out of the body at death. In dreams he sees his dead friends, and he also sees living friends whom he knows to be far away. Therefore he concludes that in every man is a spirit which may sometimes leave the body during life and which per-

manently leaves the body at death. Thus he knows souls, and he concludes that the spirits in objects are much the same. Of course there may be other reasons for this belief in souls and spirits, but what I have said will suffice.

“Thus we see that man comes naturally to a belief in spirits. These, of course, grow to gods in due season. Man gives up his nomadic life and takes to the cultivation of the soil, and his gods take shape as agricultural deities. He fights, and there comes to his mind the idea of a tribal war-god. He organizes a monarchical state, and there comes the idea of the king-god. Eventually his mind leaps to the conclusion that there is one god, for he sees in things a unity that he has not known before. Only the exceptional man reaches that stage, for even to-day the majority of people are polytheists, but the masses, though they cannot comprehend monotheism, accept the terminology. In the same way the exceptional man comes to put moral values higher than his material well-being, and he concludes that God is spiritual. Most people, of course, still think of God as material; their idea of him is anthropomorphic; but they avail themselves of the other language.

“There you have, hastily portrayed, the genesis and development of the idea of God. Need I say that the belief in immortality follows the same course of development? The later stages of this growing and changing process are reflected in the

various religious literatures. The Old Testament contains invaluable records of the whole, long evolution, but the New Testament is just as much a part of the whole, and of course the literature of the religions of India, the Greek religions, and the various other religions reflect the same process. We have such a consistent scheme, one so adequate and inclusive, that it is almost impossible not to oversimplify it."

He paused, though with every evidence of intending to continue, but Priest spoke up. "I don't see," he said, "what you're driving at. Most of us here accept everything you have said. Will you explain what you meant by saying that religion is a way of superstition?"

Graff turned to Beardsley, "Will you pass me that little book?" Thumbing it briskly, he came to the page he wanted and read, "'Psychological analysis leaves absolutely no standing ground to those who insist upon interpreting the advent of Religion as the manifestation of essentially new kinds of powers, of the birth of a 'spiritual life' for instance.' Are you willing to admit that the birth and growth of religion are perfectly natural phenomena?"

Priest nodded. "I think so," he said.

"You will agree with me, then, that God didn't have a hand in the development?" Graff insisted.

"Oh, no," replied Priest.

Over Graff's smooth round face a look of per-

plexity spread. Then, smiling suddenly, he said, "Would you admit that God has no more of a hand in the development of religion than He has in the development of science, say, or literature?"

"Yes," answered Priest.

"Good. You think of God as revealing himself in many walks of life." He looked about him and saw Beardsley and Loring nodding their agreement. "Well, you three, I take it, follow my argument up to a certain point. You all believe in God as an objective reality?" They nodded. "Then it may be difficult for you to get the right angle on this question: doesn't it seem quite conceivable to you that this process might have taken place even if there were no God? Isn't it perfectly possible that belief in God is entirely a product of human needs, desires, weaknesses?"

Beardsley answered. "It is hard to say. There are metaphysical points involved. I might ask how those needs got there. I might ask a number of questions, but I will be quite candid. It seems to me entirely conceivable that the idea of God and immortality might have developed on the basis of human needs and without reference to any objective reality. How about you, Priest?"

"I agree," said Priest. He seemed always alert, and now was ready with a question, "But even if that is true, it doesn't in the least affect the objective reality of God and immortality, does it?"

"Not at all," replied Graff cheerfully. "All I

wanted to point out was that the religious development of the past could be interpreted in terms of human hopes and fears, human disappointments and human strivings. As to the status of present-day belief in God and immortality I have had nothing to say. But now let us disregard all the religious beliefs of the past, and start out like Descartes to build for ourselves. I presume that we have two chief sources of light on the subject of God, namely, philosophy and religious experience. First examining religious experience, I confess that I am puzzled. You see, I never had a religious experience, but neither did William James, and if he could venture to make an exhaustive study of the subject, assuredly I might venture the briefest of comments. When we see that it is perfectly possible to explain religious beliefs in the past on the basis of human demands, doesn't it seem likely that what we call religious experiences are induced by the desire for the comfort and strength religion gives? Of course it's not quite so simple, but I throw out that suggestion. And does it not occur to you also that a good deal of philosophizing is influenced by the will to believe? But I let that pass. Let us take philosophy at its face value. Does anybody here believe that philosophy can prove the existence of God?" No answer except for a shaken head or two. "Does anybody here believe that the metaphysical absolute of Royce, the *élan vital* of Bergson, or the limited God of Rashdall is really the same as the

God of religion?" Again no answer. "Is there anybody here who would declare that scientific materialism is untenable as a philosophy?" As there was no reply, he waved his hand triumphantly. "I think you have gone with me as far as I can expect you to go. I am content."

I was not, however, and I said, "I'm not sure that I follow you. Would you mind making clear just what your point is?"

"Not at all," he replied. "I will recapitulate. Religion grew naturally out of human hopes and fears, and we do not need special revelation or divine intervention of any kind to account for any set of religious beliefs. Moreover, religion to-day is just as much a product of man's desires as it ever was, and for that reason we distrust so-called religious experiences as evidence of the existence of God. Furthermore, philosophy cannot prove the existence of God, and the kind of God toward which the various theistic philosophies point is not the same God as the one worshiped by Christians. Philosophy is no help, then, and more than that it may deal a blow at religion because at least one quite reasonable form of philosophy denies the existence of God altogether. Is that clear?"

I nodded. "But ——"

He waved his hand. "I might as well finish now, if you will permit me. I subscribe to that philosophy. I believe that there is no God, no immortality, no purpose in the universe, no friendly

power, no revelation. I believe that by and large it is a mistake for people to delude themselves. It seems to me that people want from the gods or from God those things which they have already determined to be good. If that is so, no values will be destroyed by the disappearance of belief in God. If the fundamental principles of morality are sound, then they are sound, and whether we believe in God or not has nothing to do with it. I wish, then, that humanity would shed these delusions and would stand upon its own two feet, facing a universe of which it is an insignificant factor but in which it has a glorious if brief future."

"All very well," said Priest, "but why did you start out by saying that religion was a way of superstition?"

"That was a harsh word, unnecessarily so. I can thoroughly understand the human motives that led to the construction of the Christian Epic, as Santayana calls it, or of any other religious epic. It was inevitable. The power of discriminating between fact and desire is rare, and only in recent times anyway have there been indications of the true nature of the universe. Philosophical materialism as we know it is the child of the scientific movement. I can understand, then, and I can sympathize, but I don't accept. From my point of view all religion is superstition, but I dislike to use the word because of its connotation. I sym-

pathize with religious men and I honor them, but I think they are wrong nevertheless."

Having finished his discourse Graff sat down again. Beardsley spoke. "I think we are all very glad to have the case of the atheistic or agnostic scientist put before us so clearly, so tolerantly, and so logically. I need not say, Professor Graff, that we are not convinced." A wry smile crossed Beardsley's face, suggesting to me that he alone of the group had seriously grappled with the view of life proposed by Graff. He went on, "I think it only fair to say that for myself I accept Mr. Graff's analysis of religious growth as a product of human nature, but that is to me only the more evidence of its true divinity. Like Mr. Priest I find the hand of God in every phase of human existence, and certainly I find it here in the magnificent advance of the human race from savage animism to belief in God as a loving father. As for religious experience I do not want to speak for myself, but I cannot doubt that certain of my friends have been vouchsafed the most direct contact with the divine spirit. In the case of philosophy I agree that the God of most systems is not the God that we worship, but it seems to me that these systems are the product of excessive zeal and an unwarranted presumption concerning the powers of our poor minds to fathom the infinite. I might point out, however, that in modified form idealism gives a very firm foundation for Christian theism. Materialism is of course

perfectly tenable, but one can hardly say that it can be demonstrated. If idealism can be said to be the product of our unchecked desires, might not we call materialism the product of the scientific mind run wild?"

After his mild jest Dr. Beardsley stared into the fire. Graff clearly was not disposed to reply. Pratt and Kilpatrick, much to my surprise, had both seemed a trifle bored during Graff's harangue, but now they were stirring uneasily. Loring, who had indignantly fidgeted in his chair while Graff was speaking, now calmly placed his eye-glasses on his nose and waited for somebody to speak. Priest too seemed to be waiting, his eyes, like Dr. Beardsley's, on the leaping flames.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

Several minutes had passed, and no one had spoken. Priest arose and rapped out his pipe. Beardsley also got up, saying, "I'm afraid I must leave you. I have an engagement in the kitchen."

Graff, whose interest had lapsed once he had finished his discourse, looked up with his pleasant smile. "How about an assistant? I'm a boss cook."

"Good," said Beardsley, and they went out together.

"A remarkable man!" said Kilpatrick when the door was shut.

He referred, we judged, to Beardsley, and we agreed. Pratt kept shaking his head, and finally he remarked, "I wish I could understand Graff."

"He adds a valuable point of view," was Loring's comment.

"Yes, but we'll never get anywhere so long as we're all talking about different things. Now the fundamental question is the matter of authority. Has man an authority greater than his own reason or has he not?"

"Ah," said Priest, "there we are. Let's discuss

the idea of authority, with you upholding the Bible and Kilpatrick upholding the Church."

"There's not much to say on my side," Pratt replied. "I accept every word of Scripture as inspired by God. No question of faith can be discussed apart from the Bible. If the Bible supports it, it is so; if the Bible contradicts it, it is false. That is my whole position. As for Kilpatrick ——"

"Well," the other began, raising his massive head, "what the Bible is to you, the Church is to me, I believe that the Church was founded by Christ through Peter and the other apostles. I believe that to the Church Christ entrusted the advancement of his kingdom. For me all questions of faith are bound up with the authority of the Church. The Church is the way of salvation. That men might reap the benefits of his death Christ ordained the sacraments, the administering of which he left to the Church. These sacraments are the only way of eternal life. They have this power because Christ was the Son of God, because he died for men, and because he created the Church. These three facts are central dogmas of the Catholic faith, and like everything else relating to the faith they are established through the authority of the Church. The Church is not only the administrator of the sacraments but also the preserver of faith. All questions of faith are in the hands of the Church. The principal items of faith were established long ago

at the great councils, but from time to time it has been necessary for the Church to redefine its position, and this it has done with absolute authority and complete accuracy."

"I don't see how you can believe all that," said Pratt, with the look of amazement which was always appealing yet amusingly naive. "The Church is made up of men, men quite as likely to make mistakes as you and I. Why anyone should submit to the authority of men when there is the divine authority of the Bible is more than I can see."

"But the Bible was written by men."

"By men inspired by God."

"The men who make up the Church are also inspired by God. I do not for a moment question the divine authority of the Bible. I only add that God has given us not only a divine book but also a divine instrument for the interpretation of that book. And I think you will find the evidence for the divine authority of the Church quite as strong as the evidence for the divine authority of the Bible. What about the interpretation of Scripture? You Protestants say that one man's interpretation is as good as another's. We prefer the interpretation offered by the Church which Christ established."

"The question of interpretation is difficult," soberly returned Pratt, "but what can a man do when he believes that the Scripture says one thing and the Church tells him that it says another?"

"If he believes that the Church is divinely in-

stituted, he will realize that he must be in error. It is foolish to speak, as some people do, of a man's surrendering his reason when he accepts the verdict of the Church. The test of a man's reason comes when he establishes or rejects the Church's claim to divine authority. Once his reason is satisfied that the Church's claim is justified, it is assuredly the part of reason for him to value the Church's judgment above his own."

"But I don't believe that the Church is divine."

"There, of course, you have a right to your own opinions, but I cannot see that there is a single claim which can be made for the divine authority of the Bible that cannot be matched in the case of the Church. The evidence is qualitatively and quantitatively pretty much the same in both cases."

"The position of the Church would be stronger," commented Priest, "if it had always confined its activities to the interpretation of Scripture. If it had kept its fingers out of politics, we might all be Catholics to-day."

"Politics or no politics," said Loring, "the Church was doomed when she came up against science. Galileo was the real reformer. The Church bucked demonstrable facts, and that was her downfall."

"Protestants all!" commented Kilpatrick with a smile. "And I hope you see, Pratt, for what you are responsible. When Luther denied the authority of the Church, he paved the way for all manner

of heresies. And I must say that I find Unitarians like Beardsley or even agnostics like Graff more logical than you. Once a man questions the true fount of authority, I can't see where there's any stopping."

Priest made haste to anticipate Pratt's ready reply. "I think you are right," he said to Kilpatrick. "You have suggested just what was wrong with Luther. He wasn't ready for the idea of a Church without an arbitrary authority, so he introduced the authority of the Bible. It was a step ahead because it thrust the responsibility on the individual, but it wasn't a long enough step. It has really remained for our own time to complete the work that Luther began."

"What a lot there is," I remarked, rather irrelevantly, "to be said for the Catholic church. It civilized Europe, it preserved Christianity, it still gives tremendous comfort to certain people who feel the need for an abiding authority."

"And observe," added Kilpatrick, "how many heresies it has outlived in the last nineteen centuries."

"Usually by absorbing their best features," commented Priest.

"It's all very well," said Kilpatrick, "to talk about the Church lightly, but by your own standards you have to admit that the Church has been the only body that has really transcended national boundaries, that it has offered men a great boon,

practically as well as spiritually, in its sacraments, and that it has cared for sick souls as Protestant bodies have never done."

The voice of Beardsley surprised us. Putting his head in the door, he called, "That may be true, but I know two Protestants who have been caring for hungry stomachs. Gentlemen, luncheon is served."

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERLUDE

After luncheon, which turned out to be an extraordinarily pleasant meal, we coöperatively washed the dishes without serious damage to the china. We had left behind the seriousness of the morning, and we acted as foolishly as only men on a holiday can. Loring relaxed his dignity with comic effect, Priest and Kilpatrick were agreeably warm, and the rest of us reveled in buffoonery.

Once the dishes were washed Beardsley proposed that we take a look at the surrounding country. Taking the lead, he marched us straight across the snow-covered fields and up a hill, from which we could see, once our eyes were accustomed to the brightness, acres of level ground, all an even white. Farmhouses stood out at rare intervals, and we could see the smoke from three or four chimneys. The rutted road along which we had come indicated the location of the bungalow, which was itself invisible in its clump of pines. On the other side of the hill the land sloped down to a river-bed, to rise again in a series of hills, most of them with only occasional trees and all of them scarred with great

rocks, clearly visible under the three or four inches of snow.

We went down the hill, and after making Kilpatrick test the ice for us followed the river. We spread out in twos or threes, and I availed myself of the opportunity to walk with Graff. Soon we were so far ahead of the others that they could not hear our conversation. "Funny, eh?" he began.

"Very," I agreed, "but I am enjoying it."

"So am I. I'm afraid, though, that it's because I relish any chance for an argument. I can't say that I am very much interested in religion, even in the anthropological side of religion, which I once studied considerably before I stumbled on astronomy. I have a streak of the propagandist in me, I expect, and I like a chance to expound my views, but, as I say, best of all I like a chance to argue."

"That's a queer trait in a scientist," I commented, "though I dare say scientists have their vices too. I can sympathize with you, but I can't agree. I am interested in religion. The questions of human origin and human destiny seem to me to be still of transcendent importance, even though I have given up almost all hope of answering them. I cannot believe that scientists such as you have found the final answer, despite the fact that tentatively I have adopted much the same answer for myself. Perhaps one reason why I maintain an interest in religion is because it appeals so strongly on the

human side. Sometimes it seems to me that the human race has done nothing finer than the development of the idea of God. If that idea isn't true, then I'm sorry. I can't help feeling that a race that could imagine a God deserves to have one. From my point of view men's religious hopes seem both pathetic and magnificent."

"That's the artist of it," he replied, "but I must say that it leaves me quite cold. "You see——"

He stopped short, for a wild shouting began at our right, and suddenly a small boy on a sled swept out of the trees and across the river. Another followed him, careening between us and Beardsley and Loring, who were now just behind. The sleds dashed on, and we stopped to watch the boys as they hit a spot which the wind had swept bare and skidded to a tumble.

They soon trotted back, and Beardsley began to talk with them. We all paused to watch them take another coast. Finally Graff and I persuaded them to lend us their sleds, and we climbed the bluff until the river was completely hidden by the intervening evergreen trees. We took one look, and then we plunged down the steep hill, narrowly escaping several trees, but successfully negotiating the slide to the foot of the hill, where we dropped disconcertingly to the river. We upset at the slippery spot, but we were enthusiastic and urged the others to try. They refused, and the boys seemed to begrudge us another coast. We went on,

Beardsley catching up with Graff and me to say, "Look here, I can't have you discussing religion this afternoon. Save it for to-night."

We laughed, and he walked on with us. Soon we came to a little lake, which, under Beardsley's leadership, we began to cross. From the time we struck the river the walking had been difficult, but now it became dangerous, and Kilpatrick picturesquely berated Beardsley for exposing us all to the danger of breakage. We had successfully reached the opposite shore and had begun to climb the bluff, when Beardsley bade us to look back at the sunset, not strikingly beautiful because cloudlessly clear, but with its appeal nonetheless. We realized for the first time that we were cold, and the surprise of finding that we were not two hundred yards from the bungalow was far from unpleasant. Bursting in, we revived the fire, and sat before it. Through the western window we could see Venus, incredibly bright. Nobody said much, and we basked in the sleepy comfort of the room.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FUNDAMENTALS AND THE BIBLE

We insisted on doing what we could to help get the dinner, but once more Beardsley and Graff took the lead. Comparatively little conversation accompanied the meal, for we were exceedingly hungry, and we devoted ourselves almost exclusively to the steak and the French fried potatoes, which Graff had prepared with a solemn care worthy of some complicated laboratory experiment.

After dinner Beardsley insisted on our going out of doors again to look at the stars. Once we were clear of the pine grove, our view of the heavens was unimpaired. Venus and Jupiter were just setting. In the southeast Orion stretched forth its magnificence. The Pleiades and Hyades stood out like configurations of gems. Graff refused to lecture on astronomy, confining himself to a few jocular remarks on "the heavenly circus" and "the duplicity of epsilon Lyrae." Beardsley recited Bert Leston Taylor's "Canopus." Nobody seemed inclined to declaim, "The heavens declare the glory of God," but I suspected that the rhythm of the psalm was beating itself out in more than one

mind. In silence we made our way back to the house, each of us doubtless absorbed in his own meditations. I was supremely concerned with the riddle of the universe. The others, I imagine, pondered their various solutions of that riddle.

Once we were again seated around the fire, Loring, somewhat to my surprise, hastened to summon us back to the discussion of religion. He turned to Pratt, "And what are the fundamentals?"

"The first fundamental," Pratt began, "is of course the literal inspiration of the Bible. I believe that Christianity is the religion of a book, a revealed religion. I believe that God spoke to the men who wrote the Bible, and that he gave to them the absolute truth."

"But why," asked Loring, "do you believe that the Bible is inspired?"

"Partly, at least, because it says so. Saint Peter, in his second epistle, says, 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' This I believe to be the precise truth. When Amos said, 'Thus saith the Lord,' he too was speaking the literal truth, for what he said God had inspired him to say. I could quote other passages, for there are many of them, but these will suffice. In the second place, I believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible because that belief has been justified by time. For many centuries men have affirmed that the Bible was the word of God. Would not this have been proven a false claim if it had not been

true? The Bible has been subject to innumerable attacks, and yet it stands and its circulation increases. Why? Because it is literally true. In the third place, I believe in the inspiration of the Bible because only upon that assumption can the tenets of Christianity be unshakably founded. The Christian faith is remarkably consistent, incredibly strong. It gives every evidence of being God-made and not man-made. The chief instrument of God in the making of this faith is the Bible, and with the Bible stands or falls the Christian religion."

Pratt's earnestness was always impressive. Though he spoke without seeming to admit the possibility that he might be mistaken, there was less of dogmatism than of personal conviction in his tones. No one could think that he was rattling off a list of things he ought to believe; he was telling us the very intimate faith of his heart. Loring, a little disturbed, asked, "Would you say, then, as the late Mr. Bryan did, that the Bible must be wholly true or wholly false, direct revelation or a dastardly imposture?"

"No, I can see a certain truth in the conclusions of the critics. The Bible would have value even if it were man-made. It might even have more value than any other book in the world. It would not, of course, have the value of a God-made book. And I should not call it an imposture simply because it lays claim to inspiration. Its human

authors, being human, might quite possibly have been mistaken."

"It seems to me," I put in, "that that effectively disposes of your argument from the Bible's own claim to inspiration."

"In a sense yes, in a sense no. If a man makes a claim that is not substantiated, we may think less of him or we may not, but, if the claim is substantiated, then we think more of him for having made it. If I did not find evidence that the Bible is the word of God, I should not accept the mere statement, but I do find such evidence. I find it in the very nature of the book. Can we explain the writings of the evangelists, at least two of whom we know to have been Galilean peasants, upon any other hypothesis? Can we otherwise explain the history of Israel, both with regard to its successes and its failures? Can we otherwise explain the predictions which were later fulfilled? Can we explain the character and influence of Jesus unless we admit that what the Bible says about him is true?"

Priest, always attentive, now began to ask questions in his calm, authoritative voice. "Do you accept, then, the story of creation in Genesis?"

"It seems to me the most reasonable explanation I know, much more reasonable than the theory of evolution, but of course I should accept it anyway."

"But how about the moral standards of the

Bible? Take, for example, Samuel's wrath at Saul's failure to slaughter all the Amalekites."

"God's will for his people changes, as is necessary if they are to fulfill the destiny he has for them. And I would call to your attention that in this case Samuel shows a higher morality than Saul, for Saul had kept the Amalekites alive solely for the sake of personal aggrandizement."

"What about the familiar question of Jonah and the big fish?"

"That raises the problem of miracles. Personally I find no difficulty in believing that God would interfere in any of those sequences which we call natural law in order to fulfill his purpose. Do you doubt that he can interfere with them?"

"No, but I question if he ever does."

"That seems to me like plain dogmatism," said Pratt shaking his head uncomprehendingly. "You admit that God can perform miracles; if you didn't, of course you would doubt the Bible accounts. But you admit that he can, and yet in the face of the best of evidence you deny that he does. I don't understand."

Loring interposed suavely, as one who would make all clear. "You see, Pratt, Priest and I do not accept the Bible as any better evidence than any other ancient book. The ancients had no idea of cause and effect; to them the rising of the sun was as much a miracle as the floating of an axe head. They were not trained observers. Modern science

has a long record of the most careful observations, and this record fails to show any divergence from natural law. We have naturally come to the conclusion that God uses natural law and doesn't use miracles. The evidence for this conclusion seems to us to be so strong that we are inclined to believe that the ancient reporters of miracles were mistaken, and our conviction is strengthened because we can see in many cases how their mistakes originated."

Both Pratt and Priest were ready to speak, but I hastened to interrupt, fearing that we should be led into an interminable discussion of miracles, whereas the Bible was the subject at hand. "I think," I said, "that I understand Pratt's attitude toward the Bible, but I wish that Priest would give us his view as a whole rather than piecemeal."

"That might be well," he said. "I can explain my position very simply. I believe that the Bible is both inspired and inspiring, but I do not believe that it is literally true. I agree with Dr. Gordon of Boston that verbal infallibility is nonsense except to those 'who wear the green goggles of traditional orthodoxy,' but like Dr. Gordon, Bishop Lawrence, and Dr. Fosdick I would not yield to Machen, Norris, Masee, or even Pratt here with regard to admiration for and daily use of the Bible. I am surprised at men who think God can speak only in direct prose. Why Jesus himself taught in parables!

“In the second place, I believe that the Bible is uneven. Dr. Fosdick expresses this very well in his book, *The Modern Use of the Bible*. Have you ever tried to get any spiritual enlightenment from the book of Leviticus? Do you find much food in the ‘begats?’ Can you seriously compare the stories in Genesis with the teachings of the prophets, or the teachings of the prophets with the Sermon on the Mount?” He asked the questions without raising his voice, always coolly driving home his point.

He continued: “In the third place, I believe in the results of the so-called higher criticism. I like a thing that Dr. Jefferson says: ‘If the Bible was taken away from us by modern scholarship, it was only for a moment, and modern scholarship has handed it back to us again more useful and more precious than ever.’ This is absolutely true. Modern scholarship has given us the clue to the amazing contradictions in the Pentateuch by showing us how narratives coming from different periods have been woven together. It has shown us how to interpret the history of Israel by revealing the prejudices of its writers, by telling us about the circumstances of writing, and by bringing to hand the vast contributions of archeology. It has enabled us to appreciate the prophets, hitherto an arid desert with but few oases. It has shown us that the pessimistic book of Ecclesiastes and the sensuous Song of Songs were not written by Solomon. It has clarified the background of the gospels and

illuminated the circumstances under which the epistles were written. It has made us see that the book called Revelation is not an isolated case but belongs to a recognized type of writing. From one end of the Bible to the other it has brought out new values, solved old problems, explained perennial difficulties. Most important of all it has made it possible for us to see the religious development of a singularly gifted people, the growth and evolution, if you like the word, of religion."

He paused. "And in the fourth place, I believe that it is folly to consult the Bible in matters of science, in questions of the earth's origin, of its place in the universe, of the laws governing matter. So far as the Bible contains statements on these matters, they are mere guesses, no better than the guesses of any other people in that age. Frequently they contain sublime truths, but they are not the truths of science. The first chapter of Genesis is a masterly statement of the place of God in the creating and sustaining of the universe, but it is useless as a statement of the methods of creation. No, the Bible does not enlighten us as to the facts of science, but it does the more important task of showing us the fundamentals of human nature and revealing to us the ways in which men come to know and love God."

Pratt had been examining the floor, patiently following Priest's words, trying to understand them, trying to be fair. As he questioned Priest,

no hint of vexation crept into his voice, where there was only the tone of patient inquiry. "Does it seem to you that God would have obscured his word and left it to men of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to find the true meaning?"

"It seems to me that God's method is always to make it possible for men to discover the truth and always to let them discover it for themselves."

"You say that the Bible is uneven. In a sense I admit it. But because Leviticus is less important to us than the Sermon on the Mount, is it therefore any less true?"

"Obviously not. All I say is that the modern view of the Bible recognizes the differences, whereas the traditional view tends to obscure the differences by suggesting, if not by affirming, that the entire Bible is on one level."

"If that is so, it is unfortunate, but it does not seem to me to be so. I would ask you another question. Do you presume to be able to tell what parts of the Bible are true and what are false?"

"I fear," said Priest, "that I must make a distinction. So far as the historical sections of the Bible are concerned, there is a real question as to their truth. This question scholarship helps us answer, and I feel that I am not unduly presumptuous when I say that I can declare certain statements true and others false. Of course I cannot do this with all the historical passages in the Bible. But there are other sections, the teachings of the

prophets and of Jesus and Paul. No scholar can tell us whether these are true or not, though perhaps he can help us to know whether or not they were spoken by the men to whom they are attributed. The truth of these statements cannot be mathematically demonstrated, and it is independent of the scholars. It reveals itself in our own lives or not at all. In this realm all conclusions are personal, subjective, and more or less arbitrary, but even here I think one can make decisions. The Sermon on the Mount is true in the sense that I have just used the word. The expression of hatred in the imprecatory psalms is, in the same sense, false. Within the limits suggested, then, I think I can tell that certain passages are true and others false."

"I think," said Pratt, with a touch of awe in his voice, "that you take upon yourself a great responsibility. But now for your fourth point—does it seem to you that God would have allowed a false statement of the origin of the world to have mingled with great spiritual teachings such as you admit the Bible contains?"

"Yes, the fact that the Israelites were people of great spiritual insight does not mean that they were two thousand five hundred years ahead of their time in their conception of the universe. God is content to let such things develop in their own good time."

"Well," said Pratt, "it seems to me that for

you the Bible is a very pretty problem and not much more."

"I object. Let me read from Fosdick's book, which I find here. He is saying that a man may reject the resurrection of the flesh but keep the immortality of the soul, may reject the visitation of demons but keep his sense of the reality of sin and evil, and so forth. 'Only superficial dogmatism,' he says, 'can deny that that man believes in the Bible. It is precisely the thing at which the Bible was driving that he does believe. Life eternal, the coming of the Kingdom, the conquest of sin and evil, the indwelling and sustaining presence of the Spirit—these are the gist of the matter once set forth in ancient terms, but abidingly valid in our terms too, and valid also in other terms than ours in which our children's children may express them.' Or, 'The essential value of the Bible thus lies in its abiding and reproducible experiences, even when one has to get at them through altered categories.' Or, speaking of his own experiences, 'I saw that the new methods of study were giving far more than they were taking away. I cannot think of a student of the Bible of major importance who is not more than reverent.' "

"You leave me quite cold," Pratt replied. "After one has thought of the Bible as the word of God, any praise of it as man-made seems trivial and thin."

"Doubtless it does, but the fact remains that one cannot choose whether he will accept the Bible as

literally true or not. Many men, who would be glad of the comfort which belief in literal inspiration gives, are forced into a recognition that the Bible is man-made, as you put it. Imagine the joy with which they discover that the Bible still has value, that it is still the book of books. Imagine their surprise and satisfaction when they find that despite their change of view the Bible is still a revelation of God, a source of comfort and insight, more truly a guide and a companion than it was before."

Pratt turned to Beardsley, and a touch of humor illuminated his serious face, "The case for the defense—or should I say the prosecution?—rests."

Beardsley smiled. "Perhaps Kilpatrick would like to add a word."

"No," said Kilpatrick, "I have little to add. My position is that of my church, which you know. I have been very much interested, however, in what has been said, and I should like to know how Loring and Cleaves, who are laymen like myself, feel on the matter. I can guess what Professor Graff would say."

Loring cleared his throat and good-naturedly, albeit with weighty gesture, waved his eye-glasses at me, but I shook my head, and he began. "I was brought up to read the Bible, but as soon as I broke away from the parental influence I began to devote all my time to my science, and I neglected the Bible. Of late years, however, I have become in-

volved in controversy, finding myself on the side of Mr. Priest and his modernist friends, arguing against the materialists on the one side and against the fundamentalists on the other." As he paused Priest remarked courteously, "An invaluable ally!" Loring bowed and went on, a smile of satisfaction on his lips, "As a result I have found it expedient to read the Bible, and I have come to substantially the position which Mr. Priest has just admirably outlined for you. I find the results of modern scholarship a great help in the understanding of the Bible, which now means more to me than it ever has before. I pay no attention to its pseudoscience, of course, but in the spiritual and moral realm I value its guidance highly."

As Loring looked at me I resolved to be as restrained as he had been, for I was aware that among his many popular lectures was one on the Bible and science, and I had rather feared that he might feel called upon to deliver it to us. "As literature," I said, "I cannot praise parts of the Bible too much, and I appreciate what modern scholarship has done for us. Its most valuable contribution to our thinking is the idea that the Bible is not a unit. Once we grasp that idea we are on the brink of completely revaluing the contents of the various constituent books. I am, then, in essential agreement with Priest and Loring, but I am not so complacent as they with regard to the spiritual message—or

messages—of the Bible. I cannot accept the religion of Isaiah—or the religion of Jesus, for that matter—in every particular. In their conceptions of the spiritual nature of the universe, if you like the phrase, and in their views on morality they do not satisfy the modern mind. To me the Bible remains chiefly a work of literature, a monument, if you like, to certain of the sublime delusions of which man has been a happy victim.”

Pratt sighed. “There you have it. Deny the plenary inspiration of the Bible, and you begin a downward course. If that is insecure, then the deity of Christ, his virgin birth, his bodily resurrection, the atoning value of his death, his second coming, all are lost. Then comes agnosticism and finally atheism.”

Priest was aroused. “But that’s not so. Cleaves’ views are exceptional. Millions of men who reject the literal interpretation of the Bible are not atheists and are in no danger of becoming such.”

“Yet many come to that end.”

“But you can’t argue that way from consequences. Simply because some people go to an extreme is no argument, and anyway if a thing is true you’ve got to accept it whether you like the consequences or not.”

“Certainly,” said Pratt emphatically, “but the very fact that the higher criticism frequently leads to departure from even the beliefs of the modernists

ought to indicate to us that the plenary inspiration of the Bible is indeed a fundamental, an integral part of Christianity. The fact that when this goes everything goes suggests, at least, that this must be true."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FUNDAMENTALS AND CHRIST

No one seemed inclined to voice a further opinion, and Graff inquired with unbecoming levity, "What's next on the program?"

We looked at Pratt, who looked back at us, and the seriousness of his face checked any tendency to smile at Graffs' nonchalant query. "I presume the virgin birth," he told us.

"Well," said Loring.

"I believe in the virgin birth. I could not do otherwise since two of the gospels expressly state that it took place. That is not argument enough for you, of course, but even regarding the Bible as you do I should think you would find it difficult to deny that Christ was born in this manner. I can see no more reason for rejecting the stories of Christ's birth than for rejecting any other part of the gospel narrative. If you do reject the virgin birth, it must be because of some preconceived idea you have."

He paused, but Priest did not seem inclined to pick up the challenge, and in the hope of clarifying the issue I remarked, "There are at least two prin-

ciples at stake. In the first place, there is the question whether Jesus was born of a virgin or not, and in the second place the question whether the virgin birth is a fundamental article of Christian belief."

"Quite right," Pratt acknowledged, "and I should say yes to both questions."

"As would I," laconically added Kilpatrick.

"Well, I admit an honest doubt as to the first question," said Priest, "although I feel fairly certain that Christ was born in the same way as you and I. But I flatly disagree with you as to the second question. Certainly Christ could be the Incarnate God just as well if he were born of human parents as if he were born of a virgin. Among my friends in the modernist ranks there are plenty who believe in the virgin birth, and plenty more who don't, but they are all agreed that it is not a fundamental."

"And that," returned Pratt promptly, "is where I disagree with them. I think the virgin birth is a fundamental article of Christian faith because it is recorded in the Bible and because it is a testimony to the deity of Christ. You believe in Christ's deity, don't you?" Priest nodded. "Well, where is your evidence of Christ's deity? It is no whit stronger than the evidence for the virgin birth. If you reject the virgin birth it's a very short step to rejecting the deity."

Priest shrugged his shoulders, "To me Christ's deity is so tremendous a thing that I can't imagine its hinging on the manner of his birth."

Pratt appeared to be puzzling out his line of attack when Graff suddenly turned to Beardsley and said, "And why do you reject the virgin birth?"

"For a number of reasons," said Beardsley, speaking easily and gently tapping his empty pipe on his knees. "In the first place I don't believe in the deity of Christ. Therefore the story of the virgin birth seems to me a little preposterous. In the second place, I am very skeptical about any violations of the laws of nature, and of course the fundamentalists would admit, even insist, that the virgin birth was such a violation. These are my preconceptions, as Pratt very justly calls them. Now I hope I am willing to be convinced if shown satisfactory evidence, but I give the Bible no special prestige in matters of this kind, and I should expect from the Bible just as strong evidence as I should require from any book, ancient or modern, which recorded a virgin birth. The evidence which the gospels give seems to me insufficient, for I should need conclusive proof before I could be convinced that such violation of natural law had taken place."

"Viewing the stories purely as evidence," I asked, "what do you think of them?"

"Not very much. There is no reference to the virgin birth in Mark, which is generally agreed to be our oldest gospel, and apparently there was no reference to it in the other document which Matthew and Luke employed. The gospels of Matthew and Luke, moreover, make no reference to the

matter in their stories of Jesus' life, and their descriptions of the attitude of Jesus' family toward him would hardly seem fitting if we accept the virgin birth. There is no evidence that Paul knew anything about the virgin birth, and the author of the fourth gospel chose not to make any reference to the event. Finally, there is a decided aroma of mythology in both birth stories."

"Aren't you arguing almost entirely from silence" asked Pratt, "and isn't that a weak argument? Besides I wonder if I could answer your argument by suggesting that very few people knew about the virgin birth. Obviously the detailed reports which our gospels contain could only have come from members of the Holy Family. Perhaps the event was revealed to Matthew by Joseph and to Luke by Mary."

"Perhaps," said Beardsley, smiling.

"How did the story of the virgin birth originate if it is false?" persisted Pratt. "For all the claims there really is no precise parallel."

"I don't know," replied Beardsley, "and I hardly think it's essential for my case that I should know. Where did the story of Buddha's miraculous birth come from? Whence did all the myths arise? I don't know. Perhaps, as Berguer suggests, man has a psychological propensity for creating such stories, modeling them according to fundamental patterns of his mind. In any case I shouldn't feel that the presence of an exact parallel would prove

that the gospel story was borrowed, and I certainly don't think that the absence of an exact parallel proves that that story is true."

"You weren't," I said to Pratt, "suggesting that if the story of the virgin birth isn't true Jesus must have been an illegitimate child?"

"Well ——"

"For that," I said, "seems to me very much unworthy of you. You can see, I hope, that the story might have arisen in any one of many ways."

"Yes," said Pratt heartily, "you're right of course." And then with a burst of naive candor which made me admire him, "I'm afraid we sometimes use that business about illegitimacy as a weapon. It's really not fair."

"Good!" cried Beardsley, and then, hastening to change the subject, turned to Priest, "You would agree with me on the whole, wouldn't you?"

"On the whole, except that I believe in the deity of Christ, which makes it easier for me to conceive that he might have been miraculously born, I suppose, though by and large I agree with you that the evidence is insufficient."

"Well, what about the deity?" asked Graff in his casual manner.

Pratt and Beardsley smiled at each other, and the rest of us perceived that on that subject they had exchanged views before. We waited for one or the other to speak. Pratt, settling himself in his chair and meticulously adjusting the cuffs of his golf-

stockings, spoke first. "I believe in the deity of Christ," he said. "Yes, I can say that I believe it to be fundamental, not fundamental in the sense that I would exclude from church fellowship those who disagree, but in the sense that it is of the foundation of the Christian Church. I cling to Jesus as a man, and I find in his humanity guidance and strength, but I do not find the humanity of Christ sufficient to explain his character or his place in history. How can you deal with Jesus if you deny his deity? He will not fit into human categories; there is something in him that is beyond human experience. Moreover, without the fact of Christ's deity what is there left for the Christian Church? What distinguishes it from other religions? What gives it its authority? To me it is a curious circumstance that, though throughout history heresies have arisen denying the deity, they have all perished. Look at Unitarianism. Recently it celebrated its one hundredth anniversary. Compare its growth with the growth of the orthodox churches during the same period. With all due respect to my friend Dr. Beardsley, I would say that Unitarianism has never been a strong force except in an ethical or intellectual way. It has never possessed spiritual dynamic. And spiritual dynamic is such stuff as churches are made of. I find in history, then, a complete vindication of my belief in Christ's deity."

Dr. Beardsley's angular face peered at Pratt. "Well, Pratt," he said, "a good deal of that argu-

ment might well be applied to the infallibility of the Bible."

All of us, Pratt and Priest included, smiled, and Pratt answered, "It had a reminiscent note, didn't it?" Then he added, "You might say to Priest, 'It is very comforting to believe in the deity of Christ, but if the facts force you to the opposite conclusion you have no choice.'"

"Very good!" cried Beardsley with an appreciative smile, while Priest squirmed a little. "That is my position exactly. I suppose that I should like to believe that God had revealed himself uniquely in Jesus, just as I—and Priest too—would quite possibly feel more comfortable if we could depend on an infallible Bible. The facts in both cases force me to believe differently. It seems to me that our gospels contain the record of a very remarkable man, but a man. He is the highest point in our civilization, a man of great insight, marvelous capacity for noble living, and amazing power of inspiration. It is no wonder that his followers considered him a God. No man can know him without becoming his disciple. Dr. Jefferson says that the Bible is all the more valuable because it is human, but he will not concede that Christ is all the more valuable because he is human. With Christ as with the Bible, the first perception of the exclusively human is a shock. One longs for the comfort of the old view. But in time one sees that one has not lost but gained, that the leader-

ship of Jesus the man is much more significant than the leadership of Christ the Son of God. We realize that this Jesus differed from us greatly in degree but not at all in kind, that what he achieved we may achieve. The significance of his words is greater, his leadership stronger, his sacrifice more appealing, and his example more inspiring. In the case of the deity of Christ, as in so many cases, the liberal thinks the foundations have gone, but finds that they are firmer than ever."

"You speak," returned Priest, "of finding it necessary to reject the deity of Christ. Why? Not from any evidence in the Bible."

"Oh, no," answered Beardsley. "After all, the evidence can only hope to establish two things: that Jesus' associates believed that he bore a unique relationship to God, which I readily grant; and that he himself taught that he was thus unique, a point somewhat in dispute. But granting both these points would not establish Christ's deity, for I have already remarked that I grant the first point, and as for the second I am willing to believe that Jesus might be mistaken. No, the evidence is not, and cannot be, conclusive. It is chiefly a matter for theology. Without going too deep, I can only say that the idea of the Trinity does not jibe with my philosophy. No view of the relationship between God and Jesus seems intelligible to me except that view which makes Jesus a man, in whom the God-spirit dwelt more fully than in any other man."

"We have to accept many things without understanding them," replied Priest. "If I did not believe in the deity of Christ I could hold little hope for mankind. What you have said about Jesus' being more imitable because human leaves me cold. As well tell men to imitate Shakespeare as to imitate Jesus. If he is a man, he is truly unique, but if God is incarnated in him, then he is the standard by which we may regulate our lives, the goal of our strivings, not the evidence of our inferiority. I agree with Dr. Fosdick, who says, 'If God be not in him, God is not anywhere.'"

"I cannot but think," said Beardsley, "that you and I are closer together than you are willing to believe."

"I am afraid you are," suddenly said Pratt, "but if there is a difference, it is an important one. I think—I am not sure—that Priest has made a place for the atoning death, but I can't see how Beardsley expects anyone to be saved."

"I fear that my theory of the atonement will not satisfy you," Priest replied. "I hold that Christ, the Son of God, saves men by his influence. He was the revelation of God, and without that revelation man would be in darkness. But I believe that his saving power lies in his life rather than in his death."

"Indeed I was right when I said we were not far apart," commented Beardsley.

"That seems to me a very weak theory of the

atonement," said Pratt earnestly. "I hold that God sent Christ into the world that his death might bring us salvation. By his death we have eternal life."

"Surely you do not hold that Christ's death ransomed men from the devil?" inquired Loring.

"Oh, no," answered Pratt patiently, "that view has not been commonly held for many years. I believe that man fell through the exercise of his free will, which was given him by God though it limits his sovereignty. Then, despite the fact that man had of his own volition rejected God's ways, God, because of his great love for men, sent his Son into the world to bring man redemption. This is the theory of the substitutionary atonement. I subscribe to it, not only because it fits the facts of experience, but also because it is clearly stated in the Bible. I cannot see that man can have the slightest hope of salvation apart from Christ's death. It may be regrettable, but it seems self-evident that not even Jesus' example has made men anywhere near good enough to be saved."

"I can't see that," Beardsley said. "Quite possibly I'm not good enough to be saved, but I'm sure I am too good to be damned." Pratt's red face grew redder. "I am sure," Beardsley went on, "that when God took the trouble to develop man by millions of years of evolution, He didn't intend him for the scrap-heap."

"There you have the Unitarian of it," Priest ex-

claimed. "I, having been influenced by the Universalists, believe that God is too good to damn man, while you, to complete the *bon mot*, believe that man is too good to be damned."

"Do most modernists hold with you that all men will be saved?" I asked Priest.

"Why, no. Dr. Gordon and a good many others do, but some believe in conditional immortality, and I suppose a few accept the idea that some men are eternally damned."

I observed that Beardsley was consulting his watch, and I realized that the evening was far gone, but before the conversation could drop Pratt remarked, "I suppose there's no point in going further with the fundamentals. The two other cardinal points in the fundamentalist credo are the bodily resurrection and the second coming, in both of which I believe."

"I may believe in them figuratively," said Priest. "but in any case I don't consider them fundamental. If we believe that we are immortal, I can't see that the bodily resurrection matters one way or the other, and as for the second coming I am willing to let that wait until it happens, striving in the meantime to establish the Kingdom of God on earth."

"Is there any hope," I asked, "that the fundamentalists and modernists can come together?"

Priest answered, "It has been suggested that they could unite on a program that would appeal to both. Sherwood Eddy, I believe, suggests the following:

an inspired Word of God, Jesus' way of life, a risen and divine Savior, the eternal principle of sacrifice, the coming of the Kingdom of God through the law of love."

"Well, of course we believe in these principles," said Pratt. "They are true, but without the fundamentals I have named they are only part truths. For us to concede that the five items Priest has mentioned are the essentials of Christianity would be for us to deny the true essentials."

"What will the end of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy be?" I asked, leading them on.

Priest answered, "Who can tell? Neither side can give in. Of course I hope that through education the fundamentalists may broaden out——"

"While I," Pratt interrupted, "pray daily that the modernists may be brought to see the light."

"Exactly," said Priest with a weary shrug of his shoulders. "In the end it appears to me that there will be division of Protestant Christians into two camps, which may not be a bad thing in a way, for it will clear out a good deal of wasteful denominational machinery."

"Did it ever occur to you," asked Graff blandly, "that perhaps by the time that happens the majority of the people will be outside the churches and will be slightly amused but otherwise untouched by the fundamentalist-modernist futilities?"

I chuckled, but no one spoke, and Dr. Beardsley

hastened to rise. "Gentlemen," he said, "this discussion could go on indefinitely, but we have tomorrow, and this outing of ours is for some of us a rest as well as an argument. May I suggest that we retire? I will show you to your respective rooms."

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The exceeding roominess and comfort of the bungalow appeared as we paired off for bed, Priest and I sharing a room under the eaves. I was tired enough to rejoice in Priest's taciturnity, and we went to bed and to sleep almost immediately. In the morning I awoke to hear voices in the corridor, and rousing Priest I dressed. When we had hurried downstairs we found that Beardsley was before us. He directed us to get what we wanted and eat. We were still at the table when Graff came in, with two pairs of skis in his hands. Having been the first to eat, he had rummaged at Beardsley's suggestion through a great closet, whence he had produced the skis. Priest refused to go out, on the ground that he had brought with him work which he was under obligations to finish. Beardsley also pleaded the excuse of work, and Graff and I started out before the others were up.

After a most strenuous morning we directed our ungainly foot-wear back to the bungalow, arriving shortly before noon. The great living room was deserted, but we could not fail to hear a riotous

tumult in an adjoining room. Opening the door we found what might have been a good-sized studio, barren now of all kinds of furniture except one huge table, on which Beardsley and Kilpatrick were playing a ferocious game of ping-pong. We joined Loring, Pratt, and Priest, who were cheering them on, and before long we were participating in the championship tournament, which, by the way, Priest easily won. After we had rebuked Priest and Beardsley for pretending to have work and had sufficiently commented upon our virtuous superiority in spending the morning in the open, we left the game to prepare lunch, Graff having promised to initiate me into the culinary mysteries involved. Luncheon over, we foregathered once more around the fireplace.

Graff, who was in fine fettle, led off by saying, "A good deal of the time yesterday you seemed to be speaking a foreign language. If I were in the presence of a group of medieval scholastics discussing the number of angels who could stand on the point of a needle I couldn't feel more out of place, and less in touch with reality. I have no wish to indulge in the crude, uncritical, and unsympathetic attacks on religion which characterized seventeenth century deism and nineteenth century atheism. I believe that science has outgrown such controversies. They were natural enough in their time, when everything seemed to depend on a successful rejection of the miracles, but now most

men of science have reached the point where they are quite indifferent to the controversial questions of religion, and they can therefore afford to be sympathetic. They cannot, however—or at least I cannot—get excited over such questions as the virgin birth.”

“We are beginning a new day,” said Beardsley pleasantly. “What would you suggest?”

“Oh, I don’t care. Let’s have a debate as to whether or not Jesus ever lived. I’ll take the negative.”

“That’s really too much, Graff,” I cried. “You know that the evidence for the existence of Jesus is overwhelming.”

“Um. Let’s see. What is the evidence? There are the gospels. Is there anything else? Josephus tells us very little about Jesus, and most, if not all, of what he said is generally thought to have been added. He was writing not many years after Jesus lived, and he was attempting to give a complete history. How could he have ignored as important an event as the life of Jesus?”

“It has been suggested,” I replied, “that Josephus, who was writing for Gentiles, deliberately avoided reference to Messianic movements. And there are other suggestions. But I think it is enough to say that Jesus was so inconspicuous that Josephus did not think him worthy of mention.”

“Quite a concession,” said Graff. “But all I want

to point out is that there is no reliable witness in secular history to the existence of Jesus."

"Granted. But the argument from silence proves nothing, and besides we have the gospels."

"Oh, if you'll base your case on the gospels that's all right. Then all I reply is that the gospels are pure fiction. They were made up by the adherents of Christianity."

"But where did Christianity come from, if Jesus never lived?" asked Pratt in perplexity.

"It was simply a synthesis of Greek and Jewish thought. Most scholars will tell you that there is comparatively little in Christianity which cannot be traced to Greek or Jewish sources. It began with a few men who borrowed from both cultures. Among other borrowings from the Greeks was the idea of a savior-god, which came from the mysteries. At first Jesus was no more a real man than Orpheus, Mithra, or the Great Mother, but gradually the conviction grew that he actually had lived on earth, and then there came to be biographies of him, utilizing the myths that had grown up. Probably the letters of Paul are the earliest documents we have, and certainly they might well give the impression that Christ was not a historical character. Perhaps the fourth gospel was next; who knows? And finally, of course, the synoptics, where the humanization is at its maximum."

"Very ingenious," I replied, "but hardly convincing. It is rather too long a process to have

taken place in fifty years, and yet there is much to indicate that Mark was written by the year 80 at the latest."

"Very simple," he answered. "Probably this development took place over two or three centuries. Once we do away with the idea of a historical Jesus, we don't have to have him die in the year 30, do we? This sect may have been developing for years before that time."

"I see you have read your Drews and your Smith, but do you really find any evidence for this pre-Christian Jesus? Do you find any satisfaction in the parallels that Jensen draws? Moreover, isn't it usually the case that history moves from the personal to the idealization and deification, rather than the other way."

"And yet it is frequently stated that the superiority of Christianity over the mysteries lies in the fact that it had a historical founder. Might not the members of this Jesus-sect have realized the advantages? But" he laughed, "I really agree with you that there is not much doubt that Jesus lived. I find the parallels and the word-plays very poor stuff, and I grant that a tendency in the direction of making a god a man would be most unusual. All I wanted to do was to liven the discussion a bit."

"And this was the man," remarked Pratt, in a low but perfectly audible tone, "that wanted us to discuss something real. He said he couldn't under-

stand the language we spoke. Well——” We laughed, Graff as heartily as the rest.

“Yet,” I suggested, “hasn’t Graff done us a service by suggesting how little we really know about Jesus? I sometime marvel at the temerity of these people who write biographies of Jesus, when we know so little about his life.”

“It seems to me that we know quite a bit about Jesus,” Beardsley remarked. “We have the four gospels.”

“And yet that’s not so very much,” I answered. “When you have made allowance for repetitions the remainder is quite slight. All of Mark practically is in either Matthew or Luke, and of course they duplicate each other considerably in the non-Markan material. That leaves a comparatively small body of material, if we exclude the fourth gospel, which presents a view of Jesus so different from that of the synoptics that many scholars are dubious how much of it to accept. But even if we utilize every available item of information, we have nothing about Jesus’ childhood and youth. We have the account of three years at the most, and a very sketchy account of that. Far from covering every incident of Jesus’ life during those three years, the gospels touch only a few scattered events. Far from giving all his sayings, they preserve for us a mere handful.”

“Nonetheless,” Priest commented, “we know

quite as much about Jesus as we do about most men in antiquity."

"Except, of course, that he left no writings. It is little enough at best that we have, and that little is not entirely reliable. The gospels are not the work of modern historians, but the random writings of men who were setting down at second hand what they learned from Jesus' disciples. They were not interested in accuracy as we use the term, and they were influenced by their own desires and prejudices. The result is uncertainty."

"You don't leave us much to stand on," commented Priest, "and yet on the whole I think you're right. But I should like to point out that one often learns much about the character of a man from a chance account of a chance act as from volumes of biography, and that a man's teaching may sometimes be as well summed up in a few sentences as in a series of books."

"There is truth in that," I replied, "and yet where there is much that is seemingly contradictory it is hard to know what act or what words."

Priest pondered briefly. "Well," he said, "I think I can safely call Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God central."

Kilpatrick and Pratt nodded slightly, as did Beardsley. "All right," I said, "what does Jesus teach about the Kingdom of God?"

"To speak in our language instead of his, he

means a better social order based on righteousness and brotherly love."

"Maybe! But I don't see where you find much about the social order," cried Beardsley.

"Nor I!" declared Pratt.

"It doesn't appear on the surface perhaps," was Priest's reply. "The men who wrote the gospels were obsessed with the idea that Christ was soon to return, and they therefore tended to forget or ignore specific social teachings, but the spirit is there and can easily be found by one who approaches the gospels with an open mind. Take the teachings relative to non-resistance. Do you suppose that they had no bearing on the most acute problem facing the Jews, the problem of the attitude to be shown toward Rome? The Zealots wanted to fight Rome, trusting in God to bring them the victory. Jesus counseled the people to build up their civilization and to overcome the Romans by moral strength and not by force. Look at Jesus' attitude toward the downtrodden, the harlots, the poor, and so forth. Look at his attitude toward the hated tax-gatherers. Always he was trying to make them better members of society, the while he sought to socialize the attitude which other people took toward them. The high value which he places on personality is strongly indicative of the trend of his social teachings. His wide humanitarianism reflects itself in his attitude toward the Sabbath, where he shows that he puts life above institutions. He insists that

wealth is not to be sought after, and he vigorously attacks the rich, but such passages as the parable of the steward give the impression that he was attacking the misuse of wealth rather than the fact of wealth. He was interested in the family and sought to maintain its purity. He was democratic and held that the rulers should be the servants of the people. In the phrase, the Kingdom of God, Jesus summed up all his social ideas. As Shailer Mathews puts it, 'By the Kingdom of God Jesus meant an ideal social order in which the relation of men to God is that of sons and to each other that of brothers.' "

"No," said Beardsley with a friendly but sardonic smile, "I can't see that. It seems to me that Jesus is much more original and much keener of insight than you make him out to be. If it had been the social teacher you describe he would have been quite in line with the prophets, and like them he would have attacked the social abuses of his times, the corruption of the government, the vice of the great cities, the oppressions practiced by the rich, and the general lack of faith. He would not have hesitated to express his attitude toward Rome, nor would he have been sparing in his denunciations. It was an age when a social reformer would not have been amiss, and I doubt if the Jews would have crucified him, though the Romans might. No, Jesus chose the more difficult task. He realized that all social reform is futile unless one first reforms the indi-

vidual. Therefore he said, 'The Kingdom of God is within you,' truly the most significant, the most revealing phrase in all his teachings. What is the parable of the sowers but a parable of the way in which the Kingdom can develop in the hearts of men? I am surprised, Priest, that you did not follow Charles Foster Kent in his opinion that the parable of the laborers in the vineyard teaches the principle of the minimum wage. Of course it manifestly teaches that men can achieve the central righteousness which is the Kingdom of God, even though they are late in doing so. All the parables, of the pearl, of the mustard seed, and all the rest, teach the same message. Jesus is trying to implant in man a new idea of God, the fatherhood, and a new attitude toward God and toward life. He knows that this seed, if once rooted, will grow and flourish, and he is confident that eventually it will make a new and better social order."

"You have admitted half my point," returned Priest, "when you say that Jesus was aiming at a better social order, even though you believe he was aiming at it indirectly. There is, however, a most important difference between us. I say that Jesus aimed directly at improving the social order, and you say that he sought to improve individuals. We disagree chiefly as to the method he took, and there is much to be said on both sides."

Graff precipitated himself into the conversation with his usual suddenness. "You talk about ac-

cepting the historical evidence, and yet you flatly ignore the obvious fact that Jesus meant the Kingdom of God in an eschatological sense. How else can you interpret his remark to the High Priest at his trial? 'Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of Heaven.' Then there is the long passage, which is found in Mark, the earliest gospel, giving the eschatological program in detail. Knowing what we do about the Messianic hope of the Jews, is it possible to interpret such passages other than literally?"

Priest replied, "The passages are there, but they seem almost certainly to be interpolations. After Christ's death the idea grew up that he would soon return, and therefore it was felt that he must have promised a second coming. Thus these passages crept into the gospels. They were influenced, moreover, by the hard times through which the Jews and Christians were both passing. The chapter in Mark, for example, clearly refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70."

Pratt would not give Graff an opportunity to reply. Almost stammering in his eagerness, he said, "I am very glad that Professor Graff has raised this point, which seems to me to be fundamental. We have these passages, and there is no objective reason for rejecting them. I personally believe that Jesus meant them literally. It is on the basis of these passages that we fundamentalists believe that Jesus

will return to judge the world in his own good time."

"I also accept them literally," said Graff, "but with an important reservation. I believe that Jesus was mistaken. You hold that Jesus was referring to an event which is still in the future. I believe, however, that he had in mind an event that was to take place in a very short time after he delivered those words. Probably he believed at first that the day of doom would come during his own lifetime, but later, when he realized that he must suffer and die, he believed that the day would be postponed until the time of his death or soon after. I find this attitude coloring all his teachings. I agree with Schweitzer that the eschatological interpretation of Jesus' life is the only adequate one. From the very beginning of his career Jesus believed that he was the Messiah, a conviction that came to him, I think, at the time of his baptism. His acts, the healings and so-called miracles, were signs of his Messiahship. He concealed his conviction from all, even the disciples, until late in his career. Finally, at Caesarea Philippi, he confessed his ambitions and his faith, and on entering Jerusalem he for the first time publicly assumed the Messianic role. That he believed the Kingdom was at hand is shown in the instructions which he delivered to the disciples on sending them forth, but it is also apparent in all his teachings. He preaches a mere interim-ethic, a course of action suitable for people who are await-

'ing the end, but not suitable for people to continue to live by."

Graff was now the center of the discussion, and one could see by his face that he enjoyed his position. Pratt was the first to fire a question at him. "I agree with some of the things that you have said but not with others. What reason have you for saying that Jesus expected the end at once?"

"I should think it would be enough for you that he said that some then living would never taste death, but that is not enough for me, for I can't argue, as you do, that he must have made that remark because the Bible attributes it to Him. No, it is the whole tone of the thirteenth chapter of Mark that convinces me."

Pratt apparently had a reply ready, but Priest forestalled him. "As I say, certain passages support your point of view, but I have tried to show that they are interpolations. I might add to what I have already said that Jesus may have used the Messianic terminology to a minor degree because he could not otherwise have made himself intelligible to his contemporaries. He used language which roughly described his conception of his purpose, but he used the terms loosely. The trouble came when the evangelists not only took these statements literally, but also expanded them because of their conviction that the end was at hand."

Beardsley nodded approvingly at Priest, and Graff caught the gesture. "I don't want to seem

personal," he said, "but it seems to me that most of your difficulty arises from your unwillingness to admit the possibility of Jesus' being mistaken."

Beardsley answered, his long, yellow hands playing casually with a book, "It isn't merely a matter of being mistaken. If Jesus believed himself the Son of Man in the Messianic sense, the deliverer of Israel, the central figure in the Day of Doom, then, as you have suggested, his ethics have no validity for our time."

"I object to that," I hurriedly interposed, "and I should like to put forth a view that reconciles the opinion of Graff to some extent with yours. I think that Graff is entirely right in saying that eschatological conceptions dominated Jesus' idea of himself, but I think that he—and Schweitzer—are wrong in saying that Jesus therefore preached an interim-ethic. I am not sure that for Jesus an interim-ethic would have differed so very much from a personal ethic, but, and this is more important, I hold in any case that Jesus was not so consistent as Graff would have us believe. He would make it appear that Jesus thought of nothing but his Messiahship. My idea of Jesus is that he was less intense than that. He accepted his mission, devoting himself to it whole-heartedly, but that did not prevent him from being interested in individuals. In that respect I agree with Dr. Beardsley as against Mr. Priest. Either because his mind didn't work that way, or because his confidence that the end was

at hand made him indifferent, he didn't pay much attention to institutions. But he paid much attention to individuals. This interest in individuals seems to me to be inextricably bound up with the Messianic element, and I do not believe that we can understand Jesus without taking both into consideration. What does he say about the Kingdom of God? Very little. What he talks about is what we must do to inherit the Kingdom. In other words he is interested principally in conduct, and the phrase, the Kingdom of God, simply sums up the whole thing. It is meant literally, just as Graff says, but it is applied in terms of individual conduct, just as Beardsley says."

There was general discussion, and I defended and enlarged upon my thesis, trying to show that Jesus' views on conduct were not modified by his belief in the imminence of the end. Then Kilpatrick spoke, "I should like to express another view of the Kingdom of God, namely, that by that term Jesus designated the Church. Jesus founded the Church, and He must have realized its importance, but he seldom referred to it explicitly. Clearly, then, what he had in mind when speaking of the Kingdom was the Church. Many Protestant theologians have recognized this. Ritschl, I believe, made a distinction, saying that the Kingdom was informal and the Church formal. I, of course, do not make that distinction."

Loring brushed the ash from his cigarette, and

with the heavy humor which had endeared him to many women's clubs remarked, "Six people, six opinions. Was ever the old proverb, '*Quot homines, tot sententiae*,' better exemplified? And what shall I, a poor layman, a humble student of science, do? Shall I advance a seventh opinion, or shall I remain silent, thus giving the impression that I am really the wisest of the lot?" We laughed good-naturedly, partly perhaps at his sleek smile of self-satisfaction.

CHAPTER NINE

JESUS AND THE LIFE OF TO-DAY

After we had shifted our positions and Priest and I had attended to the lighting of our pipes, Beardsley remarked, "It is queer how a discussion on one phase of a man's life or message will involve consideration of his entire personality and his place in history."

"Yes," said Kilpatrick, "there really seems to be nothing left to say about Jesus."

Thus we tentatively agreed that the discussion was closed, and having so agreed we immediately reopened it. I was responsible, for I casually said, "I notice that Klausner in his new book reaffirms what has many times been said, namely, that there is nothing in the teachings of Jesus that cannot be paralleled in Jewish sources."

"Ah, yes," said Beardsley, "that may be true, but there is about him a sense of leadership which can scarcely be defined but which cannot be ignored."

"Now," I replied, "you have raised the whole question of the value of Jesus to-day."

"I should hardly call that a question," Pratt

stated. "Jesus means to-day what he has always meant. He is the living Son of God, who at a period of history took on human form in order that he might bring about the salvation of those who believe in him. Without Christ there is no hope of salvation, no Christian religion, no meaning in life. By the role he played when on earth and by his divine influence since his resurrection he is the most important figure in human history. Value—without him there simply is no value anywhere."

"Amen!" cried Kilpatrick. "But I would add to your account of the value of Jesus. He was and is all that you say, but his value is immeasurably enhanced for our day by the fact that he created the Church and founded the sacraments. Thus he provided both a way of salvation and an instrument of guidance in this life. Through the Church he still offers men eternal life and still guides them through the world's temptations."

I turned to Beardsley. "You," I said, "believe, as do I, that Jesus was only a man. What would you say about his value?"

"You tempt me, young man," he replied, "for that is a subject on which I have preached many a sermon. I will try to be restrained. For me Jesus is a great man and a great leader. By his life he set the highest standards for our lives, by his death he gave us our supreme example of self-sacrifice, by his teachings he established ideals for all times. To me Jesus is the man above men, the great leader and

example, a man to be admired, to be loved, to be followed."

"I feel much as Beardsley does," said Priest, "and like him I revere Jesus as a leader. For me Jesus is all he is for Beardsley and much more. Beardsley speaks of him as he would of any man who had lived and died and set a good example. I never think of Christ as dead. To me he is more alive than any of our contemporaries. He works with us and through us. As I look back on the great struggles in which men have sought to establish social justice I see the hand and the influence of Christ, not the influence of his example but his living influence. As I see men battling for humanity to-day I know that they are working with Christ, guided and encouraged by him. I am not interested very much in whether he was the Incarnate Logos or not, nor in whether he thought of himself as the Davidic Messiah or the Son of Man. Any term is but man's feeble attempt to describe the glory of Jesus. I am interested in his magnificent life, in the revelation of God in him, in his eternal influence in the affairs of men. To me the long record of social progress is only explicable in terms of his living contacts with men's souls. Slavery has gone, womanhood has been uplifted, the ignorant have been enlightened, the sinful have been saved—all through his influence. When I look upon the non-Christian world and see the suffering, misery, degradation that there exist, I know what

Christ means. When I try to think of God without thinking of his revelation in Christ, I know what Christ means. When I meditate upon the vastness of the universe and the insignificance of man in nature, I know what Christ means. Christ a man, yes, but fortunately for us, more than a man."

So impassioned a flow of oratory from the suave Priest dazed me for a moment, and none of us felt inclined to question or to attack him. After a brief hush Beardsley spoke. "There we have the modernist view, expressed with a passionate mysticism which is none too plentiful in modernist ranks or elsewhere."

"It is the sort of thing," seriously commented Graff, "at which I can only marvel. I should like to tell, however, what Jesus means to an atheist. Of course he is to me simply a man, but a great one. He lived a noble life, under the impetus, as I am constrained to believe, of a great delusion. He was moved by high ideals, ideals which still have their validity. I accept such of his ideals as prove valid for me, and the others I do not hesitate to reject. He was not infallible, but he possessed keen insight into human nature, and his goals for human life were high. I reverence him as I do Plato, Galileo, Newton, Darwin—as an adventurer and a discoverer."

"For once," said Loring, "Graff and I are in essential agreement, though I, not being an atheist,

would add that Jesus gives us great insight into the character of the divine."

"It is remarkable, is it not," said Beardsley, "how Jesus lays hold of all men?"

He was about to turn to another theme when I interrupted. "It is indeed remarkable," I began, "and the remarkable thing about it is that most men find in Jesus a reflection of their own ideals. Take any number of recent biographies. For Bruce Barton Jesus is a modern business man, the he-man type, an advertiser, a Rotary Club speaker, and the like. For Mary Austin he is a mystic. For Klausner and Jacobs he is a Jew. For Kautsky he is a socialist. And I might go on. What is the significance of this? To me it is simply that, as Beardsley has said, the figure of Jesus has laid hold of men. At first they thought of him as the Son of Man, then Paul thought of him more or less as the risen god of a cult of salvation, then the author of the fourth gospel identified him with the Logos, then the theologians battled for centuries as to how his nature could be both human and divine. Always he was the instrument of salvation, whether in the terms of the mysteries, in the crude barter theory of the Middle Ages, or in the atonement theory of Anselm. Always the man himself was obscured. And then suddenly men became interested in the man himself. They wanted the historical Jesus, but they couldn't find him. All that was left was the mythical figure in what Santayana calls 'the

Christian, epic.' The scholars went to the gospels, and some of them admitted that their research was fruitless. Other men and women, not scholars, went to the gospels, and finally they brought forth a man in their own image. So many recent biographers, as I have said, have simply embodied their own ideals in Jesus. So we have on the one hand the historical Jesus, whom we can but vaguely discern and who is not particularly important for our day. On the other hand we have a multitude of figures, the mythological Christs, not only of the churches but of groups of men and women outside the churches. Each figure represents a body of ideals that were vital at the time and in the place of its creation, and each figure is therefore important. But none of these figures is the Jesus who was born in Palestine and died there some nineteen centuries ago."

CHAPTER TEN

THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

"Well, that seems to be that," commented Beardsley with a comical grimace. "Where do we go from here?"

"I should like to hear Mr. Priest expound his ideas on the social duties of the Church," I remarked.

"Good," said Beardsley, with a smile and a nod at Priest.

Priest smiled back, giving a twist to his mustache. "Gladly," he said, "though I warn you that it is a favorite theme of mine, and that once I get wound up there's no stopping me."

"I'll rely on this crowd to stop anybody," Beardsley told him.

"On your head be the responsibility, then. In the first place, I have already indicated that I think of Jesus as the supreme teacher of the social gospel. I find in his words not only a sanction for the social enterprise of the Church but also a direct exhortation. Of course here I have to distinguish between my attitude and that of Beardsley. Beardsley would hold, I imagine, that Jesus is not of

particular value as a social teacher because he does not give specific statements on the solutions of economic problems. He might also argue that being limited by his own horizon Jesus could not possibly show us how to deal with our modern social problems. My answer would be based on the fact that I regard Jesus as more than a man. Therefore any word of his is significant for me. Though it is quite true that he makes no attempt to legislate on the question of poverty, for example, the fact that he is interested in the poor justifies our taking an interest, and so it goes with the other great social problems. That is, I am interested in Jesus' example in dealing with social problems, even though there is no specific legislation. And that leads to my second point. Even though Jesus might have been perfectly capable of dealing with the most complex problems, his disciples could not have perpetuated his teachings because they could not have understood them. As it is, however, he deals with the fundamental principles which must underlie every sound social order, and in many cases, though not all, he leaves the application to us."

"There," said Beardsley, going straight to the point, "is the question: whom do you mean by us? Do you mean the ministers and church officials or do you mean men in general?"

"I had in mind ministers and church officials," admitted Priest.

"Then right there is where we disagree. I be-

lieve that Jesus did lay down fundamental principles, just as you do, but I believe that it is left to every man to apply them for himself. It is our duty as preachers to spread these principles, to get men to accept them, but it is the duty of those men to apply them—in their own lives.”

“But,” replied Priest, “people do not understand the implications of these principles. In particular they do not comprehend how they bear on social relations. For another thing, people are frequently ignorant of the way in which to go about application. They simply don’t understand the facts in the case.”

“And you presume that ministers are able to give them the facts?” Beardsley asked drily.

“In many cases, yes. At least ministers can set people thinking. But better than that ministers can see that their people get expert information. The steel strike report is a case in point. Few ministers could adequately inform their parishes as to the merits of that strike, but through the experts’ report they were able to give them accurate information. I firmly believe that the chief duty of the Church to-day is to reinterpret the gospel in terms of the needs of the times. Great Scott, our grandfathers didn’t hesitate to apply Jesus’ teaching, but they applied it to individual conduct. Why isn’t it just as legitimate for us to apply it to social conduct?”

“My reply would simply be that in my opinion

it is quite futile for us to talk about this solution or that. We have to hammer away at changing human nature, by no means the impossible task that some people seem to think. Alter individual character, and the social order will take care of itself."

"Granted," said Priest, "but sometimes it seems a little difficult to change character without changing environments too. Occasionally one can make an appeal strike home, but usually when men are over-worked and underpaid, when they live in conditions of indescribable squalor, when they're badly nourished, left uncared for when sick, burdened with innumerable children—well, just try and change their souls."

"That is true," said I, "but how will preaching change all this?"

"By getting under the skin of other people," he returned. "Most of the capitalist class are nominally Christians. Tell them that to be Christians in fact they must eliminate such conditions. Throughout the country there are men and women who are beginning to accept the spirit of Jesus. Show them how that spirit must be applied. They will leaven the whole country, create a body of enlightened public opinion, and pave the way for better things. We preachers can create a body of socially-minded Christians who will change conditions and make it possible for these others, the downtrodden, to come to a place where we can reasonably hope to

reach them with our gospel. The saving of souls, the changing of character, the awakening of the divine spark are of tremendous importance, but they're not neglected, as Beardsley believes, just because we drive home their significance in the achieving of a better social order."

"That's all very well," I interrupted, "and I believe that the Church might well state moral principles in terms of social duties, but what I can't sanction is the constant reference to the social teachings. In the first place I think there are no social teachings of Jesus. I agree with Beardsley that he was interested in the individual. But even if there were I don't see why they should be made the standards to-day. I agree with Dr. Jacks, who intimated that he was sick of all this talk about Jesus' way of dealing with problems. He suggested that we try to find the best way and take a chance on its being Christian."

"That sounds very well," Priest replied, "but I can't see how one can hope to find the best way without taking the way of Jesus into account. Whether he was interested in social problems or not, he touched on the fundamentals of morality, and they are not to be disregarded in trying to solve any problem whatsoever. If they are disregarded, then the way of solution proposed is not the best way."

"Both of you," said Beardsley, "put too much emphasis on mechanical solutions to suit me. We are wasting our time trying to find social machinery

that is fool-proof, and it can't be done. What we need to do is to get at these problems as they arise in human nature. If we can substitute a spirit of service for a spirit of greed, there will be no labor problem. If we can substitute a spirit of love for a spirit of hatred, there will be no problem of war. I want to be fundamental, to deal with these problems at their source and not in their advanced stages."

"I wonder," said I, "if it would be cynical for me to suggest that, if we wait until we change human nature to change these problems, there may not be any humanity left. As Dewey has shown, it is hard to tell where human nature leaves off and its ways of expression begin. A great deal can be done by changing environments, just as Priest has said. And it is after all the easier and the more practical task. Why so scornful of social machinery? Granted that it will work imperfectly or not at all, if the underlying spirit is unchanged, it remains true that even with the best spirit in the world some kind of machinery will be needed."

"Well," said Beardsley, "it's mostly a matter of degree. I admit that machinery is necessary, but what I am afraid of is that people will become so absorbed in machinery, have already become so absorbed, that they will forget the more fundamental task. Let the Church, then, devote itself to that task."

"To all of which I say amen," commented Pratt.

"I think Beardsley's attitude is correct, but I would amend it. I think there is only one way in which men can be reborn—and that is by accepting Jesus. I do not believe that the chief duty of the Church is social service work. Too many churches have adopted social programs because they have lost sight of the true gospel and are vainly searching for something to take its place."

"I can't see that a church has the true gospel unless it applies it. The social mind is the mind of Jesus," Priest declared.

"Ah," said Kilpatrick, "it takes the Church to solve these problems. She has always recognized that her prime concern is with the saving of men's souls, but she has never been indifferent to their earthly welfare. When a need has arisen, the Church has always stood ready to help. Thus she has always relieved the poor and ministered to the sick, for these are perennial needs. But sometimes she has undertaken a task only temporarily, to lay it down when some instrument of which she approved was ready to engage in it. At present she is far from indifferent to social problems. Thirty years ago Pope Leo issued his encyclical on the labor problem, not only laying down fundamental principles but also suggesting their application. In this country the Social Welfare Council has been in the forefront in making constructive proposals. But the Church is never distracted from her central purpose by these activities. In such a manner she

avoids the two extremes of indifference and absorption."

None of us spoke, for we had learned that we could never hope to carry any subject through until all the odds and ends were disposed of. The afternoon had gone, and already it was dark, with Venus once more brilliant in the west window. Sometime in the course of the discussion an automobile had driven up the rutted drive, but Beardsley had not gone out. Now, as the discussion gently paused, he rose and left without excuse, but he soon returned, smiling broadly but saying nothing. We sat in the half dark waiting.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

We had been silent for fully ten minutes when Beardsley commented, "So far we have said very little about science. Loring here holds that there is no conflict between science and religion. I move that we ask him to explain his position."

"Good!" exclaimed Priest.

"It's a long story," said Loring in his impressively urbane manner. "In the first place, I must speak as a biologist, since that is my field. And it may be just as well, for biology is the storm center at the present time. As a biologist I can say quite freely that for me there is no struggle between religion and science. I believe in evolution and I believe in God. Science deals with phenomena. It can have nothing to say as to what underlies phenomena. For dealing with phenomena science has developed a technique, known as the scientific method. By the use of this technique science has been able to give us its great discoveries concerning man and the universe. Now biology deals with the development of life. In this field scientists like Linnaeus painstakingly struggled to classify the

data, discovering a great deal that was unknown about species, the resemblances between species, the geographical distribution of species, and so forth. But it remained for Darwin, working on the foundation established by his predecessors, to suggest an hypothesis that would bind these facts together. This hypothesis was the theory of evolution, the theory that these various species had developed from a common source, the higher coming from the lower. Thus he had a theory which fitted all the facts, and which has fitted all the facts discovered since his time. But Darwin went a step further. He tried to discover what had made these species develop, and he suggested two forces, sexual selection and natural selection. Sexual selection, which deals with characteristics which lead to survival because they make the owner an attractive mate, is no longer highly regarded. Observation has shown that sexual selection, while it may play a part, is not a very considerable factor. Natural selection has also been subjected to attack, but to my mind it is clearly the chief factor in evolution and the only factor the existence of which has been conclusively demonstrated. There may be other factors—I think there probably are—but we know little, if anything, about them. Natural selection argues that variations occur through the processes of heredity and that such variations endure as have survival value."

He coughed decorously and went on, "You will

pardon me, I trust, for taking so long over a matter which is familiar to you all. Now let me speak of religion. Religion deals with a field quite other than that which is the province of science. Religion treats of the things of the spirit, with what lies beneath the phenomena that are the concern of science. So long as religion devotes itself to this field, and so long as science keeps away from this field, there is no difficulty. The trouble comes when, as has been well said, dogmatic scientists clash with dogmatic religionists. But I would not limit myself to so negative a statement as I have just made to you. Science and religion do deal with different provinces, but there are points of contact. The question of origins, for example, is one which the scientist cannot answer. However far one traces back the process of evolution, it is still necessary to say, 'In the beginning, God.' Moreover, the general tendency of evolution, from the lower to the higher, suggests a divine purpose in the universe. But again I say that religion is independent of science, that the man whose religion is free from false science is never in conflict with true science. Just to sum up I should like to quote the statement drawn up and signed by a large group of scientists and religious leaders."

He drew from his pocket a little folder and read to us, " 'The purpose of science is to develop, without prejudice or preconception, of any kind, a knowledge of the facts, the laws, and the processes

of nature. The even more important task of religion, on the other hand, is to develop the consciences, the ideals, and the aspirations of mankind. Each of these two activities represents a deep and vital function of the soul of man, and both are necessary for the life, the progress, and the happiness of the human race. It is a sublime conception of God which is furnished by science, and one wholly consonant with the highest ideals of religion, when it represents Him as revealing Himself through countless ages in the development of the earth as an abode for man, and in the age-long in-breathing of life into its constituent matter, culminating in man with his spiritual nature and all his God-like powers.' " He took off his glasses and looked pointedly at Pratt.

Pratt was ready for the fray. "Evolution," he said rather loudly, "is nothing but a guess."

Loring raised his hands, "Oh, Lord! If evolution is a guess what is there that is fixed. I don't believe that there is a first class scientist in the country who doesn't believe in evolution. There is a vast difference, my friend, between an hypothesis and a guess."

"Haven't some scientists," demanded Pratt, "said that evolution couldn't be proven? Didn't Bateson say that the origin of the species remained unestablished?"

"Yes, he did, and he continued by saying that he still believed in evolution. I have admitted

that there are real differences of opinion concerning the manner of evolution, but the fact of evolution is universally admitted by scientists."

Pratt was making an effort to regain calmness. "Anyway," he went on, "there is nothing in the Bible about evolution, and there are passages which give a totally different view of the origin of man."

"There you are," Priest suddenly remarked. "Just as we said yesterday, if you persist in using the Bible as a textbook of science, you're bound to get into trouble."

"If I may point out the attitude of the Catholic church," put in Kilpatrick, "I think you will realize how wisely it has acted in this matter, as in others. The Church has never made any official pronouncement on the subject of the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis. So great a churchman and scholar as Augustine interpreted these chapters in a manner not unfavorable to the theory of evolution. Many Catholic scholars to-day accept many points in the position of the evolutionists. The Church encourages speculation, but she stands ready to interfere if that speculation conflicts with established doctrine."

"I'm surprised," said Pratt hotly, "that the Catholic church doesn't perceive the danger in all this. The theory of evolution insults God and demeans man."

"So," said Loring with careful malice, "you prefer mud to monkey." Pratt stared at him blankly.

"You think," Loring resumed suavely, "that God made man out of a little mud. I think that He made him out of a monkey, as you would erroneously put it. I am not sure that my conception is any lower than yours."

We were all amused when Pratt ignored Loring's manner. "The real question," he said, "is whether God used evolution, as Mr. Bryan ably expressed it. I believe He didn't. Observe what the theory of evolution does: it teaches men that the world can get along without God. Thus it makes men atheists. What is the God of the evolutionists? Either He's a kind of absentee landlord, who started things running and then let them run by natural law, or else He is natural law. What kind of a God is that? Compare the God of Christianity, God the just and loving Father, God who cares for even the sparrows, God who has made the earth for man and who controls man's destiny, God who made man in his image and sent his Son to save man. There is a God whom men can worship! The God of the evolutionists is no God at all. Let the modernists make the most of the theistic scientists. Most honest scientists are atheists."

"Good for you!" almost shouted Graff, and I could see the grin on his face in the flickering light from the fire. "I can't abide these scientists who want to have their cake after they've eaten it. They very nicely throw to the churches such choice bits as the vital force, or the purpose in the universe,

or the prime mover. Anything they can't explain they let the Church get all the comfort out of that it can. Any scientist who accepts the theory of natural selection commits himself to a view of the universe in which God is unessential. The very heart of science is to explain facts and events without reference to supernatural forces such as God. Science necessarily leaves unsolved some pretty steep problems, and what do the helpful scientists do? They pass these problems over to the churches. They tell the churches they can have the blanks, the while they devote their lives to filling in the blanks. The only honest position is agnosticism which calls the blanks blanks and not God."

"But you're not an agnostic," snapped Loring. "You're an atheist."

"Right!" answered Graff, unperturbed. "But so far as my science goes I'm an agnostic, and so are you. If you weren't you wouldn't be a scientist. The only difference is that you insist on putting God in the blanks, while I think that these remaining blanks may be filled just as the others have been. And so far as a purpose in the universe is concerned—well, where do you find it?"

"In the development of nature up to man and in the development of man higher and higher."

"Then your idea is that the universe was made for man."

"Precisely."

"Once more Pratt has my sympathetic approval.

If there were a God, and if he had wanted to make man, I don't believe he'd have taken several million of years. The special creation theory seems a lot smoother and more efficient to me. But seriously, doesn't it appear ridiculous to suppose that man is the whole show? Of course man has powers that the other animals haven't, but he has developed by the same process as they. Come over to the observatory some night and take a look at the heavens. I guarantee that you'll leave with a different opinion of the importance of man. I think Flammarion said that life is an unprofitable episode on one of the lesser satellites of one of the least of suns. The word unprofitable is unscientific because subjective—he found life unprofitable, I find it profitable—but otherwise the statement is perfectly correct."

Loring squared his shoulders with dignity. Appealing to us all, he began, "Man seems so unimportant to my friend here because of his view of the universe. What he says about scientists who throw the blanks to religion as a sop has a grain of truth, but it misses the central point. Graff is wrapped up in his science, which is as it should be. I am sure we all respect him for his many achievements. But he has allowed himself to become indifferent to almost everything else. I happen to know that he is fond of music, but I wonder if his love for music could have survived if he had ceased going to concerts. Obviously it would have atrophied. And that is just what has happened in the

case of religion—he has allowed the side of him that would naturally be responsive to religion to atrophy. I firmly believe that there is something in man that gives him a sense of God. That something can be cultivated, as the great mystics have demonstrated. With some of us it is never very acute, just as with some of us the musical sense is never very acute. But it is always there, and it can be cultivated. If a man waits until he is forty before he makes an attempt to become sensitive to the things of religion, he will have difficulty, and he will never make much of a success. I waited—to my regret. At first I was cocksure, but the older a scientist gets the less confidence he has in his science. He knows there must be something more. I have reached out for that more. In so doing I have surrendered nothing of my science, a fact that has necessitated an adjustment, which is what gives the appearance of leaving the blanks to God. Perhaps that is what we do, but I well know that if we put God in the blanks we find that he really includes those areas which we are pleased to think we have explained.”

Loring had spoken with so much feeling that he had lost a little of his composure. After a moment or two of silence, Beardsley remarked, “I should like to hear from you, Graff, as fully as we have just heard from Loring. I suppose this will seem crude to you, but what does your materialism leave you?”

"Everything," Graff replied blandly. "If a thing is beautiful, it's beautiful, isn't it? If an action is good, it's good. Whatever man prizes is its own justification. Unfortunately men have always thought it necessary to invent a mythology or a theology to support their judgments, but they really needn't have bothered."

"But what incentive is there in life if there is nothing eternal?" asked Priest.

"Every incentive. As Leuba says, man works quite as well with an incentive that is just before his nose as he does with one in infinity. I can't see that eternity is much of an incentive. I do my work because I enjoy it, and because people who come after me will profit by it. That's much more of an incentive than any conception of eternity, if there could be such a thing as a conception of the inconceivable."

"You're incorrigible," said Beardsley. "You're the real enemy. Whatever may divide the rest of us, we believe in a living universe, to use Jacks' phrase, a universe dominated by purpose, a universe that is friendly to our highest ideals. We need not concern ourselves much with science, except when science denies the existence of a divine spark in men. Against the science that does that we must fight to the last ditch. There the real issue lies."

"Amen!" said Priest.

"And yet," smiled Graff, "we materialists have our ideals too."

"You have no business to," Beardsley retorted.

"On the contrary, for we recognize our ideals for what they are, while you make up fairy stories about them."

Graff grinned with such good humor that Beardsley burst out laughing. "Sometimes," he said, "I think you're on the side of the angels too."

"God forbid!" cried Graff, at which incongruity we hooted.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

Strange sounds had been issuing for some time from the adjoining room, and now the folding doors into the studio were flung aside. A tall, fair-haired man stood smiling at us, and behind him we could see the long table, covered by a multiplicity of dishes and lighted with candles. "I judge," said the man. "that you have reached a break in your discussion. If so, dinner is ready."

Beardsley rose. "Gentlemen, may I present Mr. Kimberley Stock, the well-known artist and the owner of this bungalow. I had hoped that he could be with us during our stay, but it was impossible. He insisted, however, on preparing for you this surprise. As you come to know him better, you will, I am sure, regret, as I do, that he could not be with us from the first."

After Beardsley had presented us individually to Mr. Stock, we sat down at the table. He had evidently brought servants with him, and the meal proved a pleasant contrast to the rough and ready product of our own hands. Stock, who looked quite the successful artist, made an engaging host,

asking many questions about our deliberations. He would sardonically stroke his black Van Dyke as we told him of this or that remark. When we had finished dinner, he suggested that we return to the living room to continue our talk, and we again assembled about the fireplace, glad to be spared the washing of dishes.

"This," said Beardsley, "will be our last opportunity for profound discourse on matters of high import. Kilpatrick, Loring, and Graff have already told me that they must return to the city to-night. Priest and I plan to go back early in the morning, and we shall be glad to take the rest of you. Our solemn conclave nears its conclusion. What shall be our theme this evening?"

"If there is so little time left us," I remarked, "should we not spend it discussing the future of the Church?"

"By all means!" cried Beardsley, and the others nodded their approval. Stock also applauded the suggestion, declaring himself ready to contribute his share.

"I wonder," said Beardsley, "just what there is to discuss. Pratt here believes that the Church will continue its work of saving souls until the day of judgment, unless it is hoodwinked by atheistic scientists into accepting evolution and disregarding the Bible. Kilpatrick, I should imagine, has not much doubt that the Mother Church will weather the storm, for, as he has pointed out, she's weathered

a good many before now. Priest and I, despite some slight differences, oppose to this static view the idea of the Church progressive, which emphasizes the truth to be revealed quite as much as the truth that has been revealed, accepts the discoveries of science, enlarges its idea of God, and humanizes its idea of Jesus. Loring is presumably with us. Graff, on the other hand, is indifferent, granting, I suppose, our right to bother with such trivialities if we want to, but for himself wrapped up in the exploration of the heavens."

"You leave me out," I remarked, "and omit Mr. Stock. Therefore it becomes necessary for us to speak for ourselves."

"Proceed, then," Stock insisted.

"Very well. I do not share Graff's indifference, but I do believe that the Church is doomed."

"And why?" asked Priest.

"I have already intimated," I said, "that I believe that the liberal Church has lost its *raison d'être*. What is Christianity, historically speaking? It is a system of salvation, having as its cardinal points the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, and the possibility of salvation through Christ. Liberals almost universally reject the first point. On the second point they differ, but the most orthodox of them considerably modifies the old Christologies. On the third question they hedge a good bit, but when they say, as they sometimes do, that they are saved through Christ, they mean something quite

different from what Pratt here means. In what respect, then, are they Christians?"

"Obviously," exclaimed Beardsley, "in the sense that they try to live according to the teachings of Jesus."

"For purposes of argument," said I, "let us grant that. But you in turn will have to admit that historically Christianity has been a religion of salvation."

"Yes, unfortunately."

"Unfortunately or not, it is so. Christianity has had a unique place in human thought precisely because it offered a way of salvation; according to its adherents the only way of salvation. You have broken with that tradition. You accept Jesus as a teacher, just as you accept Plato, Buddha, Spinoza, and others. If you find more guidance in his teachings than in the teachings of these other men, the difference is, after all, one of degree not of kind."

"I would admit all that," Beardsley replied. "I am quite content to say that Jesus was simply a prophet, though the greatest prophet that ever lived."

"And to carry your reasoning a bit further, you would say that your philosophy of life is based on the contributions of many thinkers, Jesus among them. Thus you come to the position of the community Church, which flatly states that it is not Christian and which seeks to include the best in

all religions. Such a position most liberals, yourself included, I imagine, refuse to take. And in any case such a position would mean the disruption of the Church as we know it."

"Still and all," said Beardsley, "I can't see that you've said anything as yet to support your contention that the Church is doomed. All you have said is that the form of the Church must be changed, that we must surrender the name of Christians. I doubt if you're right, but if you were, the Church might still persist in a new form, like the community Church, if you will."

"Now," I returned, "we come to the heart of the matter. There are two questions. First, will the Church change its form rapidly enough to forestall its losing its grip. Second, would even a change of form save it? I should reply in the negative to both questions, and of course if my answer to the second question is no, it doesn't matter what I think about the first. Why do people go to church? Either to get something they believe is absolutely essential to their welfare or else to express something they already have. Now if the Church offers salvation, and the people believe that they can win salvation only through the Church, they will obviously attend. But, as you have already admitted, the liberal wing of the Church does not offer salvation, and the constituency of the liberal Church would not believe its claims if it

made them. That seems to eliminate the first reason for church attendance."

"And what about the second?" asked Priest, as I paused.

"Well, just at present the Church isn't much help in that respect. Suppose a man has a real experience of God, whatever that may be. Can the average Protestant service mean anything to him? The average prayer must appear to him to be a mere irreverence, the average prayer an insult, and the average church music a blasphemy."

Priest chuckled. "You're pretty much right, Cleaves. But let me probe deeper. If the Church could learn to help people to express their religious experiences, wouldn't that save it? That seems to me to be the central point of Sperry's *Reality in Worship*, which I rather suspect you've been reading."

"There again we have to face two possibilities. First, it is a fair question whether people nowadays have this desire for expression. Second, supposing that they have it, will they find the Church necessary as the instrument of expression? Now for my part, I should answer the first question affirmatively, with due qualifications. Men do, even to-day, sometimes find themselves *en rapport* with the universe. Certain of the phenomena of mysticism are very real, whether one explains them by referring to glands or by referring to God. And when men have this feeling, they will require a

way of expressing it. Moreover, once they have had it, I suspect that they will seek a method of regaining it. What I doubt is that they will turn to the Church. As I have already said, it is futile for them to turn to the Church now, and I think they are learning that they do not have to turn to the Church. Of course, if one thinks of this experience as essentially religious and if one considers the Church as the only link between man and God, one will turn to the Church, but people are increasingly coming to question both the major and the minor premise of that syllogism. To put it in personal terms, I and a lot of other people are discovering that it is quite possible to have rational, moral, and happy lives without the Church."

"Well, what do you find as a substitute for the Church?" asked Priest.

"No one institution," I replied. "A great concert or a great play serves for me the purpose that I imagine the Church ought to serve. That is, they help me to recapture that sense of belonging in the universe which all of us crave. Moreover, writing gives me a certain scope for self-expression in all my moods. And if my life were completely rounded out, as some day it may be, I should want to add practical philanthropy to my program, and I might even dabble a little in a chemical laboratory. In other words, I cling to the old pagan ideal of truth, beauty, and goodness. I find, on a purely empirical basis, that my life is richer be-

cause of them. I find only fragments of truth, no beauty, and frequently a perverted kind of goodness in the churches. But in science—and also in literature and art—I find truth; in art again I find beauty; and in philanthropy, social service, and wrestling with my own job I find plenty of opportunity for goodness.”

“But look here,” said Priest, “what about the social enterprise of the Church?”

“I think the Church might well surrender all its enterprises to other bodies, who could carry on the work more efficiently.”

“But at least,” said Pratt, speaking for the first time since dinner, “you must admit that these other social enterprises need the dynamic which the Church gives. They may scorn the Church, but most of their social idealism is a Church product just the same.”

“Right!” said Priest.

“Perhaps,” I answered, “but I am by no means convinced. In my experience the Church has frequently had to build on existing social idealism instead of social idealism’s being supported by the Church. But I have talked too much. I know you are not convinced, but I should hardly hope to convince you however extensive my presentation of my case. Let some one else have the floor.”

“I should like it,” said Kilpatrick, “if I may be so bold. I want the chance to speak a word on behalf of the Catholic church, and Cleaves has given

me my opportunity. He is just right when he tells you that people go to church to get something they must have or to give something they must give. That's the strength of my church. That's why it doesn't need to worry. It has something every man really wants—the key to salvation. And no other church so completely satisfies the desire for the expression of religious emotion. I've been sitting here, thinking about that. The Church at its best—in its architecture, its music, its mass—offers to every man the opportunity to express his deepest feelings. I can't help but believe that any man who had had a religious experience, as Cleaves called it, would feel real satisfaction in going into a Catholic church. Doesn't it make you think pretty hard to realize that the Catholic church has not only a body of doctrine which has resisted every heresy but also a mode of worship that satisfies man's deepest needs? I know that you will judge this to be narrow, but when I look about me at the hundred and one Protestant sects, at the new faiths that spring up over night, at the growth of atheism, I wonder if the time isn't coming when men and women will return to the one church, when they will admit the futility of their little intellects and will accept the authority of the Church Triumphant."

As Kilpatrick concluded, Stock spoke up. "Mr. Kilpatrick is right," he said, while we looked at him in surprise, "and Mr. Cleaves is right. The Church

must be founded on the story of Christ's life and death, of his founding an omniscient Church, of his atoning sacrifice. And the story is true, not as history or as dogma, but as art. The Christian epic expresses the very quintessence of human experience. It is the greatest artistic triumph of the human race. When I go to church I recite the creeds, and I believe them—as art. There, Mr. Cleaves, is the answer to your keen analysis of the Church's decay. If we could only see that the Church is founded on a myth, we could brush away all this intellectual juggling of the modernists, all this obscurantism of the fundamentalists. We could build on the strongest foundation the world affords, the foundation of the beautiful."

The good-natured Pratt fumed. Neither my scepticism nor Graff's atheism had disturbed him as much as this view of Mr. Stock's. "But it's not honest," he expostulated. "You say that you believe things that you don't believe. You make a mockery of religion."

Stock only smiled. "John Cowper Powys says that there are four stages of religious development before true religion is attained, the first being emotional belief, the second metaphysical belief, the third absolute disillusionment, and the fourth æsthetic understanding. It is when a man realizes that there is no such thing as truth that he is free to evaluate the real truth—which is the truth of art."

Graff, who had been silent, looked up ingenuously and said, "Do you know, I think that's all tommyrot."

"So?" said Stock placidly.

"Yes, I think science supplies us with certain facts that cannot very well be denied."

"Very good, my friend, very good," said Stock. "I am willing to admit that scientists deal with facts, heaven help them, but we are talking about religion, not about science, and religion is very much akin to art."

"But after all," said Beardsley, "you must grant that even religion comes up against certain facts. You want us to believe whatever we want to believe."

"Oh, no, I want you to believe what is beautiful. I see no more reason for rejecting the Christian story than for rejecting Hamlet."

"You put religion on a level with fiction!" sputtered Pratt.

"I put it on a level with art," responded Stock. "I could not place it higher."

Graff laughed. "You are indeed an invaluable addition to our company, Mr. Stock. You look on religion as a myth and glorify it for that reason. I look on religion as a myth and reject it for that reason."

"And I'm inclined to think," I added, "that Mr. Stock is quite as fatal for the Church as you. A myth that one knows is a myth ——"

"You're still pessimistic about the Church then," said Priest.

"Very. And our conversations these two days have made me more so. I have realized how the critical study of the Bible has torn at one of the foundations of the Church, how the change of attitude toward Jesus has destroyed another, and how the rise of science has weakened a third. I see the whole structure tottering. In its place what? The Catholic church and the fundamentalists will hang on for years, perhaps for centuries, but I see the other churches steadily waning. The more intelligent people, begging Kilpatrick's and Pratt's pardon, have turned to the modernist ranks. Now they are leaving them. They will adjust themselves to the bleaker view of the universe that science presents, and I think they will be quite as moral and quite as idealistic as we are. They will adhere to the scientific method, even though they may learn to be critical of its results. They will certainly find more satisfaction in art than most of us do. They may even try the value of worship when there is no God to be worshiped, for, as Santayana has said, 'It is love that makes the world go round, and not, as idolatrous people suppose, the object of love.' But the churches, these places where people are preached at and sing antiquated hymns, these they will ignore."

"Bravo!" cried Graff.

Priest shook his head. "I sympathize with you,

but I cannot agree. These ideals of truth, beauty, and goodness, of which you speak, seem to me tenable only because the universe is favorable to them. That is, I believe that the efforts of mankind are worth while solely because there is a God. And I believe that the Church, with all its failings, does bring men closer to God than the concert-hall and the theater, valuable as these are. I hope that the Church is going to become wiser and kinder. I have faith, you see, in its potentialities, because I believe that its trust in God is justified. I see it fighting intolerance, the dogmas of science as well as religion. I see it growing, learning to enrich its service of worship perhaps, learning to make its preaching vital, learning to utilize all that is good in life. I see the Church a force for enlightenment, an instrument for social justice, a source of beauty, and most of all a power in bringing men into contact with the spiritual reality which we call God. And, I may add, I believe that in all these achievements the moving force will be the spirit of Christ."

Beardsley nodded slowly. "And what do you see, Pratt?"

Pratt glanced up, his everlasting seriousness overcome by a mellow smile. "As Amos said, I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but it seems to me after this discussion that I see a powerful lot of people going to hell."

"Well," said Graff, "I'm sure I don't know why you all worry so about the future of the Church."

"Because of the need for maintaining the continuity of a great and beautiful tradition," said Stock.

"To save men's souls!" exclaimed Pratt.

"Yes, but here and not hereafter," commented Beardsley.

"To bring in the Kingdom of God on earth," Priest said with a snap in his calm voice.

I said nothing, but sat there wondering. Graff said with a shrug, "Oh, well!" And after a moment he added that it was time he was leaving. With regret we watched the three of them, Graff, Loring, and Kilpatrick, make their departure. When they had gone we talked inconsequentially of other things and soon went to bed.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AND IN CONCLUSION

The next morning we all departed, Beardsley and I setting out together. Beardsley, who seemed subdued in mood, waited until we reached the main highway before asking the obvious question: "How did it strike you?"

A little at a loss, I said, "Well, I liked it. They are good men, intelligent men, and it was a pleasure to listen to them. We didn't get anywhere, but I think each of us learned something new, something which he can utilize in his future thinking."

"That justifies the two days we spent," he replied, "and I really expected nothing more. Still it had occurred to me that we might come to some conclusions. I was foolish, I admit, but I had a faint hope that we could discover a way out of the confusion and indifference that complicate the work of the Church."

He stopped for a moment, and then resumed. "I do not want to ignore the divisive factors in the religious life of to-day. The people who want everyone to overlook matters of belief are doing nothing but make a bad matter worse. No, I

say that the fundamentalists and the modernists and the agnostics and all the rest must face the issues in which they disagree. And I am quite sure that we can learn to coöperate despite our differences. Yet I must confess that I become pessimistic when I realize, as yesterday and the day before I was forced to realize, how wide the gulfs between us are. A world that contains both Pratt and Graff is a strangely muddled world."

"I dare say," I replied, "that the world has always contained men who disagreed quite as decidedly as they do."

"No doubt, no doubt," he replied absently. "But everyone seems confusedly looking for a way of life and finding none. Sometimes I think that those who appear most certain are only whistling to preserve their self-deception."

"It is a sterile age," I made reply, somewhat tritely. "We have neither gods nor demi-gods. We are capable of nothing great, not even of great illusions. In such an age religion is certain to be impotent, the more so when there is great material prosperity. We shall, I think, witness strange developments. Perhaps we shall see the recrudescence of orthodoxy, fundamentalism in more dogmatic and more oppressive form. Perhaps there is something new coming, the character of which cannot be prophesied, a synthesis following the present disintegration much as the Christian synthesis followed the breakdown of paganism.

Or it may be that men are learning to do without religion, at least without organized religion."

Beardsley, watching the road ahead, spoke slowly. "The great periods of history have been the periods of great faith. Why?"

"Perhaps," I said, "because man only achieves under the impetus of illusion."

"Or perhaps," he responded, "because this faith has not been wholly illusion. Perhaps this faith has been the root of accomplishment because in its essentials it was justified. Perhaps the universe looks with favor upon the great ideals of men."

We turned into the streets of Caldgate, crowded with automobiles bearing men to their offices. "That," he said, somewhat irrelevantly, "is the cardinal article of my faith. That is why I cannot look unmoved at the spectacle of the disintegrating Church. I am coming to the time when I must leave my life-work. Who will carry it on? Not you young men, for you have broken with the Church. I cannot say that the Church has made civilization, but I will say that the ideals on which civilization is built are the ideals which made the Church possible. If the Church is weakening, it is because the ideals are losing their appeal. What will take their place? I fear that nothing can. Sooner or later the world must come back to them. But in the meantime, — can the Church do nothing to make men see the validity of its view of the universe? Must it stand idly by and

watch civilization go to pot? That bleaker view of the universe of which you speak cannot satisfy men because it is untrue. Or do I think it is untrue because it cannot satisfy men? You see how an age of doubt strikes at us all, especially at those who will not take refuge behind a barricade of dogmas."

He brought the machine to a halt before the bleak boarding house where I spend my days. In silence we sat for a moment. Abruptly he shook my hand. "I have a day's work," he said, "and in my work —— Good-bye, my boy."

